

Thank you for reading our Advent and Christmas Readings and Reflections.

We hope they have been useful for you in your private prayers and meditations through this season of celebration and hope.

Wishing you a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

**With our love and continued prayers,
Louise, Simon, Mikey, Ann and Sam
*Sutton Parish Ministry Team***

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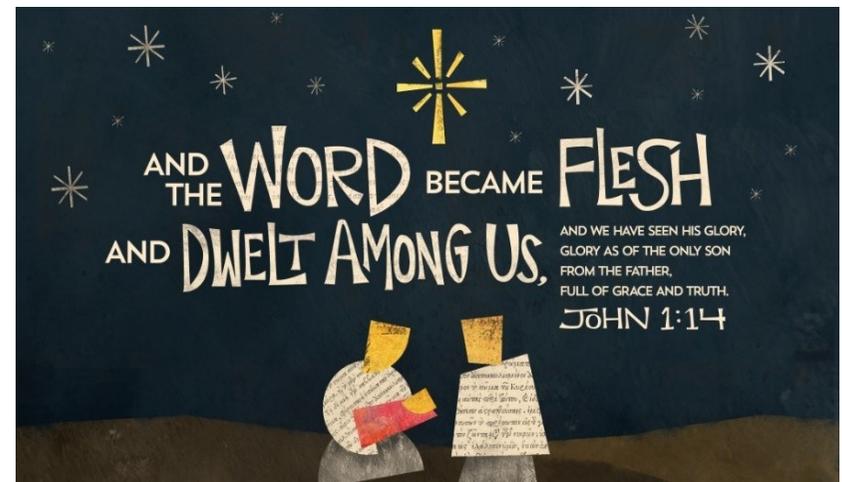
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LIVING FAITH  LOVING SUTTON



Daily Readings and Reflections for Advent and Christmas 2020



Sunday 29th November

Advent Sunday

The hope of all God's people

Isaiah 64:1-9 I Corinthians 1:3-9

Psalms 80:1-8, 18-20 Mark 13:24-37

Monday 30th November

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday 1st December

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:104, 18-19; Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday 2nd December

Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23; Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday 3rd December

Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:18-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday 4th December

Isaiah 29:17-end; Psalm 27:1-4; Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday 5th December

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 146:4-9; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

A prayer for this week

Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns,
turn us from the darkness of sin to the
light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen,

Reflection from Sam Rigby on John 1:10-18

Happy New Year everybody! First of all, may I wish every blessing for you and all those you love and care for in the year that lies ahead. Many of us started our Christmas celebrations earlier than usual in light of the tough year 2020 was but the best news for us as Christians is the celebrations don't end until Wednesday this week! On this Second Sunday of Christmas, we are looking at one of my favourite passages in the Bible, the prologue of John's gospel.

When Jesus was born into this world in human form, he looked just like any other baby. He wasn't recognised and even in his later life, was not received by his own people as the Messiah. So many people turned their face away and rejected him. But, at the same time, there lived a people of hope. People of the light. When Jesus came into the world, he started a new movement. God was doing a new thing. We have all been invited by God to join in this movement and walk hand-in-hand with Jesus as his disciples in 2021.

No words can really explain how amazing the story of the Incarnation is. No words I or anyone of the highest theological proficiency could ever really explain how incredible it was for our God to take on flesh and make his dwelling among us. For the first time in history, God came to Earth in the form of his Son to mediate between the Father and humanity. Jesus came to be our High Priest and close the chasm that existed between God and mankind. But more than this. Jesus didn't just do this in the way expected of the One through whom all things were made. Jesus came down and lived among us. Felt our pains and shared our joys. He was one of us. He is God with us. This year, may we remember that Jesus is with us every step of the journey.

Sunday 3rd January

Second Sunday of Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14 Ephesians 1:3-14

Psalms 147:13-21 John 1:10-18

Monday 4th January

I John 3:7-10; Psalm 98:1, 8-end; John 1:35-42

Tuesday 5th January

I John 3:11-21; Psalm 100; John 1:43-end

Wednesday 6th January

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:10-15; Matthew 2:1-12

Thursday 7th January

I John 3:22-4:6; Psalm 2:7-end; Matthew 4:12-17, 23-end

Friday 8th January

I John 4:7-10; Psalm 72:1-8; Mark 6:34-44

Saturday 9th January

I John 4:11-18; Psalm 72:1, 17-end; Mark 6:45-52

A prayer for this week

God our Father, in love you sent your Son
that the world may have life:
lead us to seek him among the outcast
and find him in those in need,
for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Reflection from Ann Griffiths on Mark 13:24-37

Verse 32 is a puzzle. Up till now Jesus has been in close communication with God, and he is aware of His Father's plans. Here Jesus is telling his followers about the end times when He will come again. He knows what will happen, but not know when. If Jesus had indicated exactly when the end times would come, would it have affected how Christians down the ages behaved? For example, knowing that the end isn't planned just yet could mean we can live as we please for the time being, and repent and do better nearer the time, or nearer the end of our own time. We can be certain that God has His plan and knows exactly how and when things will happen. He is not making it up as He goes along! We are told how using imagery that we might be able to understand, but the when question is not appropriate for us to know.

Jesus gives examples of why we do not need to know when.

From the fig-tree example we learn that if we are perceptive we may be able to read the signs that indicate the end is near. Some people felt they recognised the signs during the two World Wars. We may wonder if there are such signs in today's world. We do not know, so we must remain watchful and prepared. From the example of the doorkeeper, who was responsible for the safety of his master's house and belongings, we learn we must not be found sleeping, or unprepared, when Jesus comes again.

The message is clear. The end times will come, Jesus will come again, but it will be in God's chosen time.

All we can do is to keep awake and watch.

Sunday 6th December

Second Sunday of Advent

The Old Testament Prophets

Isaiah 40:1-11 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13 Mark 1:1-8

Monday 7th December

Isaiah 35; Psalm 85:7-end; Luke 5:17-26

Tuesday 8th December

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 96:1, 10-end; Matthew 18:12-14

Wednesday 9th December

Isaiah 40:25-end; Psalm 103:8-13; Matthew 11:28-end

Thursday 10th December

Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1, 9-13; Matthew 11:11-15

Friday 11th December

Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1; Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday 12th December

Ecclus 48:1-4, 9-11; Psalm 80:1-4, 18-19; Matthew 17:10-13

A prayer for this week

Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again
as judge and Saviour we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God. Amen.

Reflection from Rev Mikey on Luke 2:15-21

Sometimes I still find it amazing that God would call me, Mikey, to be a priest! It's such a privilege to have such a special role to be set aside to be able to serve God and just love on God's people! I have to pinch myself sometimes because as far as I'm concerned... I'm just a lad from the dingle! I'm not belittling honest work like this by any means, but I used to work for both KFC and Burger King. I think I may be one of the only people to have been praying for someone to give their lives to Jesus then and there whilst making a Whopper! I'm grateful for where I am, but I am also thankful that God chose me from a humble walk of life to lead in God's Church.

My story is quite similar to that of the Shepherds... Shepherds would have been considered unclean by those keeping the ceremonial and orthodox laws and would have been despised by teachers and scribes because they wouldn't have been able to observe the proper hand washing rules. Their jobs were that of the lower class, and the demands on them in terms of the time and energy their jobs took would have been great.

Unable to approach the altar at their temple, imagine how special those Shepherds felt seeing the birth of the Messiah. They would have looked after the sheep that would have been taken away as an offering at the temple, but it is so fitting that the first people to see the Christ child are the Shepherds. Why? Because even though they had been denied access to the temple to become ceremonially clean, they are the ones chosen to be the first to witness the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world...

Sunday 27th December

First Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Galatians 4:4-7

Psalms 148 Luke 2:15-21

Monday 28th December

Genesis 37:13-20; Psalm 36; Matthew 18:1-10

Tuesday 29th December

I John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-4; Luke 2:22-35

Wednesday 30th December

I John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-10; Luke 2:36-40

Thursday 31st December

I John 2:18-21; Psalm 96:1, 11-end; John 1:1-18

Friday 1st January

Genesis 17:1-13; Psalm 103; Romans 2:17-29

Saturday 2nd January

I John 2:22-28; Psalm 98:1-4; John 1:19-28

A prayer for this week

God in Trinity, eternal communion of perfect love:
gather the nations to be one family,
and draw us into your holy life
through the birth of Emmanuel,
our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflection from Rev Mikey on Mark 1:1-8

I love the Gospels, but if you forced me to pick a favourite, it would have to be the Gospel of Mark! Even the way this book starts absolutely buckles you in for an adventure! "This is where the Good News starts...". So, strap yourself in, because on the horizon is the Good News, the salvation that God in human form will bring. Mark starts this story by letting us know that this is the story to end all stories! Mark is essentially getting the audience to switch on because no other story in the history of ever will be like this one. The Good News is the most important thing we will ever hear...

We then IMMEDIATELY (Notice how many times Mark uses this in the rest of their Gospel!) cut to the Desert where John The Baptist is crying out in the desert telling the whole world that someone incredibly important is coming! Mark draws us back to the echoes of the Prophet Isaiah and the audience who have been waiting SO LONG for their Messiah to come and save them know that THIS IS IT!

At Advent we are forced into thinking about so much in the build up to Christmas. The food, the presents, the gifts, our families. All these things are of course important, but we must learn from the example of John the Baptist. We are in a festival where we celebrate the impending coming of the Christ Child from heaven to earth, and the question we have to think about is, amidst all of the things we must think about, which of them are we going to choose to proclaim?

So, let's choose to proclaim the Good News. Let's choose to share the most important story ever told, and let's strap ourselves in... Because Jesus is on his way!

Sunday 13th December

Third Sunday of Advent

John the Baptist

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Psalm 126 John 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday 14th December

Numbers 24:2-7; Psalm 25:3-8; Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday 15th December

Zeph. 3:1-2, 9-13 ; Psalm 34:1-6, 21-22; Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday 16th December

Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-end; Psalm 85:7-end; Luke 7:18b-23

Thursday 17th December

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:1-5, 18-19; Matthew 1:1-17

Friday 18th December

Jer. 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-end; Matthew 1:18-24

Saturday 19th December

Judges 13:2-7, 24-end; Psalm 71:3-8; Luke 1:5-25

A prayer for this week

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
help us to speak the truth, to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday 25th December

Christmas Day

Isaiah 62:6-12

Titus 3:4-7

Psalm 97

Luke 2:1-20

Reflection from Sam Rigby

We've finally made it. Christmas has felt a long time coming for many of us this year with all of its challenges. No words can really express the pain, the frustration or the heartbreak endured by everyone in some way in 2020. But now, on this day of hope, on this day of celebration, let us not dwell on the months gone by but rather, look forward with hope.

Just like the angel of the Lord who appeared to the shepherds in the timeless passage we read in Luke 2, we must hear God's herald of good news. A herald that causes all of our fears to subside. We have the hope that God has got us safe in the palm of his hand and will bring us through to the other side of this awful pandemic. That hope all started on this day over two thousand years ago in a lowly stable somewhere in the Middle East. All because of the birth of a little baby boy. A little baby boy that the world did not recognise, but we know who he is. He is the Messiah, the Lord. The birth of the baby Jesus started a new chapter in the life of God's people. Who would've thought that night in a dusty stable that this little baby boy would grow up and bring hope to all the nations?

On this joyful day, however you are celebrating, I pray you will join with me in giving thanks to God for the gift of the baby Jesus and the hope his Incarnation brings to the world even to this day. Let us join with the choirs of angels in crying 'Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace to his people on earth'. A very happy and blessed Christmas to you all.

Thursday 24th December

Christmas Eve

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16 Acts 13:16-26

Psalms 89:2, 19-27 Luke 1:67-79

Reflection from Rev Louise

As I write (November 21st!), we are hoping and longing that with Christmas will bring with it the gift of togetherness with loved ones and the sight of the end of the year of pandemic. The season of Advent has resonated more deeply than ever because of the depth of our yearning. The sense of the world's need for a saviour correlates with how much we've experienced our vulnerability. At this moment though, nobody knows what will be possible and like the inhabitants of the stable on Christmas Eve, we wait with baited breath. One thing is certain, and nothing can prevent it, circumnavigate it, sabotage it or diminish it. Jesus is coming. No rules of social distancing, no limited numbers who can meet, no isolation ward, no shut doors or closed hearts will stop him coming. The time is right. Our Almighty God has an answer to the needs of the world. It's Jesus. Most precious of nights. The night the world is waiting for. In the holiest and most mysterious miracle of birth, the One who is beyond us, so far from our understanding that the Old Testament taught that anyone who looked upon God would die, is born into our world into our arms and into our hearts. He changes everything.

A moment to reflect:

Is there anything you need to lay down so that your heart and your hands will be open to receive God's gift of Jesus?

Take some time to kneel close to the manger thanking God for his indescribable offering of himself.

Reflection from Rev Louise

"Rejoice: the Lord is near." As Christmas draws near, the Church emphasizes the joy which belongs in our hearts over all that the birth of our Saviour means for us.

The third Sunday in Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. The word Gaudete means "Rejoice". Rose vestments are worn in some churches to emphasize the joy that Christmas is near, and some churches also light a rose coloured candle on the Advent wreath. There is a feeling of relief from advent austerity, hoping, longing and yearning, and instead a robust and joyful affirmation that the Lord's coming is soon. Though this may feel like it relates to Christmas (and it does!), it also heralds the second coming of Jesus, which we also anticipate with joy.

There is a sense of urgency- to be ready to meet him. Also a sense of how much it matters that we tell others about the joy of knowing him, so that they may know him too. John the Baptist was a witness and a proclaimer of the good news of the coming of Jesus. We are invited to be like him in our day.

Questions to reflect on:

Can you keep a 'joy' diary this week, and spend a few minutes each day remembering and thanking God for any moments that have given you joy, and gifts he has given that make you truly thankful?

Is there anyone who God may want you to be a witness to this week? Anyone you can invite to a Christmas service gathered or online?

Sunday 20th December

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Romans 16:25-27

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 Luke 1:26-38

Monday 21st December

Zeph. 3:14-18; Psalm 33:1-4, 11-12, 20-end; Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday 22nd December

1 Samuel 1:24-end; Psalm 113; Luke 1:46-56

Wednesday 23rd December

Malachi 3:1-4, 4:5-end; Psalm 25:3-9; Luke 1:57-66

Thursday 24th and Friday 25th December

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day can be found overleaf

Saturday 26th December

Jeremiah 26:12-15; Psalm 150; Acts 6

A prayer for this week

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son:

grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,

so we may be ready to greet him

when he comes again as our judge;

who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the

Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Reflection from Rev Simon

The collect (special prayer) for this Sunday, the last before Christmas has an ever relevant edge to it .

*Eternal God, as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,
so we wait for his coming in glory;
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age
to see, with her, our great salvation
in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The birth pangs of this present age...As a guy I'm certainly not going to comment on this directly, I am in awe of all mothers. 2020 has been a year of waiting for a looming pandemic and then see-sawing our way through various limitations on our lives, coupled with a worldwide tragedy of death and illness.

We wait for a widely available vaccine to bring some semblance of normality to our world. Mary waited at times alone, young, vulnerable (pregnant and unmarried) and concerned about what would be. Yet through these nine months there was a quiet faithful indestructibility to her spirit and trust in God. The angel declared that God was with her, he reassured her and explained all that was to be. 'For no word from God will ever fail.' Mary said yes, she declared her service to God and her acceptance that he could be trusted. As we wait for Christmas, can I invite you to do the same with all that will be, however uncertain it may seem. May that yes be in us each day. Amen.