



The First Sunday of Advent 30th November 2025

My brothers and sisters, we enter today the solemn season of Advent in which the Church bids us prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ; a coming that we recall in the Child of Bethlehem; a coming that we experience in the gift of his Spirit, in the bread of the Eucharist, in the joy of human lives that are shared; a coming we wait for when God gathers up all things in Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on the coming of Christ who brings light to the world. Let us leave behind the darkness of sin, walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us. And as we turn towards the light, let us have on our hearts all those who see no light, for whom all is darkness and despair. Let us pray that they too may be illumined by Christ who is our light.

In the name of the + Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

HYMN

1. Hark! A herald voice is calling:
'Christ is nigh' it seems to say;
'cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!'

2. Startled at the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies

3. Lo! The Lamb, so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiven.

4. So when next he comes with glory,
and earth's final hour draws near,
may he then as our defender
on the clouds of heaven appear.

Invitation to Confession

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

Loving and faithful God, as we begin the season of Advent, we celebrate that Jesus has come, and that He promises to come again! Jesus came to bring light and hope, but our hearts are often shrouded by darkness and despair. Jesus came to bring joy and peace, but our hearts are often encased by sorrow and turmoil. Jesus came to bring life and love, but our hearts are often hardened by resistance and contempt. As Jesus entered the world to conquer sin and death, we open our hearts in confession to be cleansed from our sinfulness and to be restored to the image of Jesus.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies
Cleanse us from our sins, +
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

People of God: awake!
The day is coming soon
when you shall see God face to face.
Remember the ways and the works of God.
God calls you out of darkness
to walk in the light of his coming.
You are God's children.

Lord, make us one as we walk with Christ
today and for ever.
Amen.

Collect of Advent Sunday

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

A Reading from Scripture Isaiah 2 1-5

2 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:
2 In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.
3 Many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
4 He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.
5 Come, descendants of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord
Praise be to thee, O Christ



Psalm 122

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
2 Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
4 That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the Lord—
to praise the name of the Lord
according to the statute given to Israel.
5 There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.
7 May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
8 For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

A reading from Scripture Romans 13 11-end

11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

HYMN

1 Ye servants of the Lord,
each for your master wait,
observant of his heavenly word,
and watchful at his gate.

3 Watch! 'tis your Lord's
command,
and while we speak, he's near;
mark the first signal of his hand,
and ready all appear.

2 Let all your lamps be bright,
and trim the golden flame;
gird up your loins as in his sight,
for awful is his name.

4 O happy servant he
in such a posture found!
he shall his Lord with rapture see,
and be with honour crowned.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Alleluia.

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel is written in the 24th Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at the 36th verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord

36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

This is the Gospel of Christ
Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

Only the gospels of Matthew and Luke give any reference to the birth of Jesus – but the second coming of Jesus the Christ is everywhere in the rest of the scripture both the Hebrew and Greek text (the Old and New Testaments.).

There has always been a lot of interest and curiosity about the second coming of Jesus; many dates set, many signs interpreted. Is it a great moment when Christians 'evaporate' from earth caught up in Christ and the 'rest' left behind? The scripture describes a particular extraordinary and unique event for which we must be prepared. In the in-between time there might be another way that we can think about this, an interpretation of a second coming prior to this in which are involved now?

There have been two apocalypses (revealing) already. God has already been revealed in the natural realm – in creation, and he has been further revealed in the incarnation of Jesus. The person of Jesus was the divine 'apocalypse', revealing of the Christ (the Anointed One) into the world. (Apocalypse" is a Greek word meaning "revelation", "an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling".)

Thus, the person of the Christ, whom we know as Jesus, is from before all time and creation and the future is his also. In light of this, might we also see the church the forerunner. Could it also mean that the second coming of Christ is the Church in this age, with the appearing of Christ at the end of this age? That Christ's second coming has in some way already begun through the church? (I can imagine my theologically minded readers already preparing their email response!)

If we have given ourselves to Jesus in belief and faith, we know a 'coming' into us of Christ, Christ comes to us as the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *"It is good that I go away for then the Spirit will come"*, and then he says, *"I will come to you"*. In each one of us as members of his body the church, in the Eucharist and in the action of the Holy Spirit - Christ is always coming.

What, when and how this 'yet to be' coming will be, we do not know but it will. We who know and love him will then be with him and that is all we need to know. Jesus says the hour and day are not known except by God but don't let it come upon you as a thief in the night. It will be unexpected.

And this is something that Paul picks up on in his letter to the church at Rome, we are to Wake up and put on!

¹¹ ... wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ... So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

We are to get on with life, but we need to be upon the watch. As Christians we can never come to think we are living in a permanent situation. Rather we live in state of expectation. We are to live prepared, to check ourselves out, is there anything we need to address before our death. We do not know when Christ will return, we do not know if today could be our last. We live now to fit (or unfit) ourselves to appear in the presence of God.

The one great truth that these texts enshrine is that history is going somewhere. The stoics regarded history as circular. Every 3000 years or so the world was consumed by a great conflagration and then it started over and history repeated itself. Therefore, history is going nowhere, and that mankind was tramping around on an eternal treadmill.

The Christian conception of history is that it has a goal and at that goal is Jesus the Christ. There will come an ending of things as we now know them, the great Day of the Lord. Paul preaching to the Athenians tells them:

"For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

In his letter to the church at Ephesus he tells us.

For God had allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposes in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated (ACHIEVED) in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfilment in him. (Eph. 1 21).

Ultimately all things will be gathered up in Christ. For some it will come upon them as a meeting with one they have not known. But for those who have come to him in this life, it will be the inexpressible joy of being with Christ. Yes, the words of the gospel are disturbing - they speak of what is to come, but recall the words of Jesus to those who loved him:

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Lk 12.32).

HYMN

1 Ye servants of the Lord,
each for your master wait,
observant of his heavenly word,
and watchful at his gate.

2 Let all your lamps be bright,
and trim the golden flame;
gird up your loins as in his sight,
for aweful is his name.

3 Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
and while we speak, he's near;
mark the first signal of his hand,
and ready all appear.

4 O happy servant he
in such a posture found!
he shall his Lord with rapture see,
and be with honour crowned.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid
we pray to Jesus.
Come to your Church as Lord and judge.
We pray for our world at this time asking your mercy and aid.
Help us to live in the light of your coming
and give us a longing for your kingdom.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your world as King of the nations.
We pray for the King and his Government asking you for wisdom and guidance.
Before you rulers will stand in silence.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to the suffering as Saviour and comforter.
We pray for those known to us and those who have asked for our prayers...
Break into our lives,
where we struggle with sickness and distress,
and set us free to serve you for ever.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.
We remember those who have died this night, those we love and see no longer.
Give us with all the faithful departed
a share in your victory over evil and death.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory.
Lift us up to meet you,
that with all your saints and angels
we may live and reign with you in your new creation.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;
give new courage to your people,
who trust in your love.
By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom
on earth as in heaven,
where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.
Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

A Blessing for Advent Sunday
The Dismissal Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' *Mark 1.14,15*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMN

1. Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

2. Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart

3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4. By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

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