

Worship for Advent Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome: to worship for Advent Sunday. We are grateful to all who are taking part this week. If you would like to get involved in future online services, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Grace and peace to you
from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessèd are those who will come
from east and west, from north and south,
to feast in the kingdom of God.

Hymn: StF 171 – Hark the glad sound The Saviour comes

- 1. Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long;
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.**
- 2. He comes the prisoners to release,
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.**
- 3. He come the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to enrich the humble poor.**
- 4. Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
your welcome shall proclaim,
and heaven's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.**

Philip Doddridge (1702 – 1751)

Opening Prayers

God of all glory,
you brought the universe into existence,
and raised up witnesses
to your greatness and love.

We praise and adore you.

Grant that by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit
we may worship and serve you,
and praise your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 'The first commandment is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of confession

Let us confess our sins to God,
trusting in his mercy and forgiveness.

**Holy and forgiving God,
we have sinned against you and each other
in thought and word and deed.
We have turned from your life-giving word,
and ignored the message of those you sent.
We are unprepared for the coming of your Son.
Have mercy upon us and forgive us,
that strengthened by your love
we may serve you more faithfully;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Declaration of forgiveness

'I am making all things new,' says the Lord.
This is Christ's gracious word:
'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

God of mercy and power,
whose Son rules over all,
grant us so to live in obedience to your holy will,
that at his appearing
we may be raised to eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn: Waiting here for you

If faith can move the mountains
Now our master's due
We come with expectations
Waiting here for you

You're the Lord of creation
Your Being's so much heart
Your arms abound salvation
Loved us from the start.

Waiting here for you,
It's you we adore, singing alleluia.

You're everything you promised
Faithful, good and true
We come before your Spirit
Always think of you.

Waiting here for you,
Singing alleluia
Waiting here for you

Martin Smith, Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Isaiah 64:1-9 (NRSVA)

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and
come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your
presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—

to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your
presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not
expect,

you came down, the mountains quaked at
your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy
cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our
iniquity.

⁸Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalm 80:1-7; 14-19 (NRSVA)

Prayer for Israel's Restoration

*To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of Asaph. A
Psalm.*

¹Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,
shine forth

² before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

**³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

⁴O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's
prayers?

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

⁶You make us the scorn of our neighbours;
our enemies laugh among themselves.

**⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

¹⁴Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,

¹⁵ the stock that your right hand planted.

¹⁶They have burned it with fire, they have cut it
down;

may they perish at the rebuke of your
countenance.

¹⁷But let your hand be upon the one at your right
hand,

the one whom you made strong for yourself.

¹⁸Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

**¹⁹Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

Epistle 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (NIVUK)

³Grace and peace to you from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

⁴I always thank my God for you because of his
grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you
have been enriched in every way – with all kinds
of speech and with all knowledge – ⁶God thus
confirming our testimony about Christ among
you. ⁷Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift
as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to
be revealed. ⁸He will also keep you firm to the
end, so that you will be blameless on the day of
our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who has

called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus
Christ our Lord.

Gospel Mark 13:24-37 (NIVUK)

²⁴But in those days, following that distress,
“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

²⁶At that time people will see the Son of Man
coming in clouds with great power and glory.

²⁷And he will send his angels and gather his elect
from the four winds, from the ends of the earth
to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: as
soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come
out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹Even so,
when you see these things happening, you know
that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰Truly I tell you,
this generation will certainly not pass away until
all these things have happened. ³¹Heaven and
earth will pass away, but my words will never
pass away.

The day and hour unknown

³²But about that day or hour no one knows, not
even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only
the Father. ³³Be on guard! Be alert! You do not
know when that time will come. ³⁴It's like a man
going away: he leaves his house and puts his
servants in charge, each with their assigned task,
and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵Therefore keep watch because you do not
know when the owner of the house will come
back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or
when the cock crows, or at dawn. ³⁶If he comes
suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

³⁷What I say to you, I say to everyone: “Watch!”

Sermon

Expectation and waiting – Guaranteed

Connection

Hi everyone,

You will have to forgive me this morning. As I record this, I am expecting a delivery and it may well be that our door “bell” rings with the parcel. It’s very exciting.

Sorry, I got side-tracked. However, it did get me to thinking about all the things that go to make up an Amazon delivery and how much we are relying on them (and other suppliers of course) in our present situation.

Have you thought about how it all works?

We make purchases almost every day now on a remote basis, not seeing the people who we are dealing with, but trusting in the strength of organisations to provide what we need. We purchase things remotely, paying our money through a banking system we do not see and touch.

You have to be careful though don’t you! Sometimes you get right to the end of a transaction and realise that the company is quoting a delivery date way ahead because the item is coming from China!

Mostly though they give you a delivery time that’s acceptable and more often than not it’s the following day. A text message is the next thing. It gives you a time slot – normally of a couple of hours during which they aim to arrive. I have this picture of a little man working it all out – how long it will take to get from Leamington to Kenilworth. It’s all done by computer of course. But it’s fun to imagine!

So you wait in. Look out the window perhaps. Even recognise the van now! And prepare to answer the door. Some people prepare for deliveries in different ways – have these little video bells so that they can answer the door via

their phone and tell the delivery driver where to put the parcel. We have a special “bell” for our flat which plays “yellow rose of Texas” loudly so that we make sure that we can hear it.

Have you noticed how the delivery always takes you by surprise! Every time! Even when you see the van arrive, the bell comes as a bit of a shock!

Having fetched the parcel, perhaps even wiped it? You then have the joy of undoing it. Maybe leave feedback for the company as to its arrival, use and value.

We’ve been looking at passages in the bible this morning where God came unexpectedly to his people and how he will come again.

As I thought about my Amazon delivery I was struck by the analogy that it gives us with the Lord’s coming.

Is he remote – yes

Do we trust his organisation – yes

Have we dealt with Him before – definitely.

Are we sure of the time of His coming – no.

Just as an aside – do you get frustrated when the delivery is late?? When you’ve waited the allotted time and it still hasn’t arrived?

Reminded of Hark the Herald carol that we sing. The second verse says “late in time behold him come”. I thought I was in good company then if even Jesus was late in arriving! So I looked it up – apparently it doesn’t mean “late” as we would think of it – but in God’s time we are in the later days.

Maybe in God’s time our parcels come at the right time (just a thought!)

Going back to the analogy...

Are we waiting – yes Romans 8 v 19 says the whole of creation is earnestly waiting for Him.

Are we making preparations – yes we do so every year – seeing signs more and more maybe? Recognising His delivery van??

Will he be unexpected – yes
Will we open the door – yes
Will we rejoice – absolutely.

But I hear you say – how can we be sure of these things?

I was reminded of a Thomas the Tank Engine story I used to read to my children when they were small. You know the stories by the Rev Audry.

The story was called Peter Sam and the Refreshment Lady. It told of Peter Sam who was a young “stand in” engine taking another engines place and doing his work. He was working hard carrying passengers to a station where Henry (another larger engine) was waiting to take them to the city.

Henry had told Peter Sam that if he was late he would have to go without his passengers which made Peter Sam worried.

One day he was in a hurry and started off without the Refreshment Lady being able to get on the train. He had to go back!! When he arrived at his station Henry was still waiting. The RL came to the front of Peter Sam and asked him why he had gone too soon. Peter Sam explained that Henry had threatened to leave without his passengers.

The RL laughed and said to PS not to worry. Henry wouldn't dare leave without them because it was a “Guaranteed Connection”.

In the same way we have the same – a “guaranteed connection” from the prophets to Jesus' birth and then to his Second coming.

So as Mark's gospel says:

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

I do however hope my delivery isn't that early or late!

Hymn: StF 491 – As servants working an estate

- 1. As servants working an estate
whose owner is away,
and whose return they all await
though no one knows the day,
so none of us can name the hour
the season or the year
when Christ with all of heaven's power
will suddenly appear.**
- 2. Our task is not to calculate
what angels do not know,
but faithfully to watch and wait
and Christ's compassion show.
Not loading fragile human schemes
with hopes they cannot bear,
we trust the promise that redeems
the present from despair.**
- 3. For Christ the Lord will surely come,
the King whom kings will fear,
and with God's perfect justice plumb
the justice we do here,
revealing that the present age
and every age that's past
are not the final moral gauge
that judges us at last.**
- 4. So guide, Lord Christ, our every choice
that when our hearts shall hear
your step, your knock, your calling voice
we will not hide in fear,
but welcome you from realms above
to your estate below,
where justice, mercy, peace and love
abundantly will grow.**

Thomas H Troeger (b 1945)

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THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

We come before God in prayer; let us pray:

And now we give you thanks
Because in Christ's coming among us
The day of deliverance has dawned,
And through him you will make all things new.
Amen.

Hymn: StF 169 – Come thou long-expected Jesus

- 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 for ever,
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.**

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Prayers of intercession

If you'd like to join in at home, with a response to these intercessions, then when I say "Lord, stir up your strength" please respond with "**And come among us**".

Come, Lord, be known in your church,
For without you we have no message, we have no power.
Come, fill us with your presence,
That we may proclaim your peace.
Lord, make us aware, alert to your coming,
that we may reveal your glory in all the world.

We pray for those that walk in darkness,
that they may see your light.
We remember those whose lives are clouded with troubles
and pray that they may behold your glory.

Lord, stir up your strength
And come among us.

Come, Lord, and give peace to your world.
Disperse the clouds of war and violence, of calamity and disaster.
Let your power and your glory be revealed to the nations.

We pray for all who watch, wait, and work while we sleep:
for hospital and care workers, the emergency services,
and for all who work in the dark hours of the night.

Lord stir up your strength
And come among us.

Come, Lord, to all who are unable to cope at this time,
to all who are weighed down with worries.

We pray for the ill and for those who care for them.
We remember those whose lives are clouded with despair.

We pray for the depressed and the suicidal.
We remember friends and loved ones in their troubles,
particularly as we are not able to support them as we would like
(*pause to name those we are thinking of*).

Lord stir up your strength
And come among us.

Come, Lord of our salvation, save us and we shall be saved.

We pray for our friends and loved ones departed,
naming them now in the silence
May they now rejoice in the fullness of your

presence and your glory.
Comfort their families who cannot come
together to mourn their passing.

Lord, stir up your strength

And come among us.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray together:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.**

Amen.

The Offering & prayer

Our offerings may be made in different ways at
this time, but we still offer them up to God today
in a communal way:

Advent God, accept our gifts – our uncertain gifts
in this waiting time.

Advent God, may our gifts be used to see your
kingdom come,
your will done on earth, in Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 157 – God has spoken by his prophets

- 1. God has spoken – by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holding fast:**

**God eternal reigns forever,
God the first, and God the last.**

- 2. God has spoken – by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time was born;
Light from Light to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.**
- 3. God is speaking – by the Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,
God the first and God the last.**

George Wallace Briggs (1875 – 1959)

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Prayer & blessing

We have been called in,
to be renewed in the name of the one who is
love.

Even in the darkest night,
even when there is only one small candle lit,
your power and love restore us.

Let your light shine on us as we go from here,
so that we may be warmed and strengthened
to light your light all around;

And the blessing of God,
the Father, Son & Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen.

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Hymn Words:

StF 171 – Hark the glad sound the Saviour comes

Philip Doddridge (1702 – 1751)

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Waiting here for you

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