

Rebuilding Hope and Confidence - Advent

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus

sung by St Martin's Voices

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.

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

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

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)

Introduction: Advent Word

by Roddy Hamilton

it is ancient
as old as the first word
for it is the first word ever
spoken by a God
who was feeling the divine voice
for the first time
its sound has taken many forms through
the ages, but it speaks
still, the single
truth it always has
some hear it beating swords into ploughshares
others hear it hammering spears into pruning hooks
and still others hear the
original word
that shaped these others
the first word:
the word,
love

Bible Reading: Luke 1: 67-79

Then Zachariah, John's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,
"Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to help his people and has given them freedom. He has given us a powerful Saviour from the family of

God's servant David. He said that he would do this through his holy prophets who lived long ago.

He promised he would save us from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us. He said he would give mercy to our fathers and that he would remember his holy promise.

God promised Abraham our father that he would save us from the power of our enemies so we could serve him without fear, being holy and good before God as long as we live.

Now you child will be called a prophet of the most high God. You will go before the Lord to prepare his way. You will make his people know that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven. With the loving mercy of our God a new day from heaven will dawn upon us. It will shine on those who live in darkness, in the shadow of death. It will guide us into the path of peace.”

Hymn: Thou didst leave thy throne

sung by Janet R, smallchurchmusic.com

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown,
when thou camest to earth for me;
but in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
for thy holy nativity.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
there is room in my heart for thee.

Heaven's arches rang when the angels sang,
proclaiming thy royal degree;
but of lowly birth didst thou come to earth,

and in great humility.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
there is room in my heart for thee.

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word
that should set thy people free;
but with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn,
they bore thee to Calvary.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
there is room in my heart for thee.

When the heavens shall ring, and the angels sing,
at thy coming to victory,
let thy voice call me home, saying "Yet there is room,
there is room at my side for thee."

My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,
when thou comest and callest for me.

Author: E. S. Elliot (1864), Tune: Margaret (Matthews)

Prayers

from Mothers' Union: Advent and Christmas prayers

This Advent, as we wait for
the Hope of the World
we pray for God's hope to overcome
the despair of loss and loneliness.

God of light and hope,

Hear our prayer

This Advent, as we wait for
the Light of the World

we pray that the love of God would bring light
in the lives of our family and friends.

God of light and hope,

Hear our prayer

This Advent, as we wait for
the Hope of the World

we pray that the love of God would fill
us all with sure and certain hope.

God of light and hope,

Hear our prayer

Mary Sumner's Personal Prayer:

**All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch,
do thou by thy Spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak,
the prayer I breathe,
or the life I live. Amen**

Reflection: For all we know

For all we know,
before Mary sang her song of joy
she wept tears of frustration
despair
and heartbreak.
I like to think she did.

For all we know,
before Mary welcomed God's action with delight,
she fought what was happening to her
and she resented the presumption
of the divine.

For all we know,
for at least a moment
and probably longer,
Mary was bewildered, distraught and lost.

The miracle we celebrate today may somehow seem more impossible than the idea that Mary got pregnant or that God became human. It's that in the face of devastation and from deep within the truth of heartbreak and desolation there might still come unbidden a moment of joy.

Hymn: O come, O come Emmanuel

sung by St Martin's Voices

O come, O come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Refrain

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Refrain

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Refrain

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Refrain

Latin 13th century translated by John M Neale (1818-1866)

Reflection: Advent - the waiting is over

During this season of Advent we celebrate Christ's coming into the world at Christmas and we also watch with eager anticipation for his return at the end of time. We are reminded that we live in an in-between time, between

Arrival One and Arrival Two, between Jesus' arrival as a child in a manger and his arrival as a glorious king at the end of all days.

In the Bible we read about a people waiting for a Messiah, an anointed king, who will save them from those who oppress them. The Christmas story tells of the coming of that Messiah, not as a warrior king but as a child who will inspire us to be better people, who will heal broken relationships and bring justice and peace to a troubled world. It is the story of Arrival One.

However things are not better. Injustice is still the normal, wars are still fought, the planet is in crisis – the world is still in darkness and despair. So we look for Arrival Two, for Jesus to come again and put things right. But this time coming in power and glory as a supernatural Messiah who will save us from the mess we have got ourselves into. And so we pray 'Come Lord Jesus in the fullness of your risen power.'

But perhaps we have it all backwards. Instead of our waiting for God to act to put things right perhaps God has been waiting for us to act. We are the hands, the feet and the voice of Jesus. We are called to make a better world. If you are looking for a Messiah, look in the mirror.

Maybe the return of Jesus is found day by day in those who follow him and try to live by his message. Jesus has returned

in us and through us and among us. Christ has come and is always coming- through us.

So in Advent we are called to be prepared, to be vigilant not for some supernatural arrival but for the tasks God asks us to do to show that he is already in the world, and indeed has never left. For soon Advent and Christmas will be over and the real work of Christmas begins.

When the song of the angels is stilled

by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.”

God is waiting.

We have much work to do.

What are we waiting for?

Thank you for joining in with Thursday Prayers.

Choral music: The Church of England St Martin in the Fields

Theme music: Catherine Hilton

Readers: Jennifer White, Denise Smith, Margaret
Shewring, Barbara Pye, Ruth Taylor, Marc
Greenough, Andrea Walsh, Lisa Lloyd

CCLI: 5097385

**Next Thursday Prayers will be on 13th January with
the theme of Epiphany.**