

## SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> NOV (1<sup>st</sup> Sun Advent) 2020

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Call to Worship Video Advent Hope fulfilled**

**Advent Candle**

**Praise Song 'From heaven You came'**

**Prayer**

**OT Reading Isaiah 64:1-9 video**

**New Testament Reading 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 video**

**Sermon**

**World watch List Video**

**Prayers**

**Song 'These are the days of Elijah'**

**Benediction**

**Lighting of Advent Wreath First Sunday of Advent: HOPE**

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means 'coming' & in this season we prepare for the coming of Christ. One of the ways we prepare for His coming is by making an Advent wreath & lighting its candles to remind us of the gifts Christ brings to the world. The Advent wreath includes many symbols to help us think about Christ & his gifts. A circle has no beginning & no end. This reminds us that there is no beginning & no end to God & that God's love & caring are forever.

The light from the candles—which grows stronger each Sunday in Advent, reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world.

So today we light the candle of hope. The people of Israel hoped in God's promises & were not disappointed. Again & again God delivered Israel from its enemies. We too have the same experience of salvation. That is why we believe in God's promise to send Jesus to us once again to judge the world & establish his kingdom forever upon the earth. (*Candle is lit*).

Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray—Thank you God for the hope you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, & for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today & everyday to worship you, to hear your word, & to do your will by sharing your hope with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

**Song- the Servant King**

From heaven you came, helpless babe, Entered our world, Your glory veiled; Not to be served but to serve,  
And give Your life, That we might live.

*CHORUS- This is our God, the Servant King, He calls us now to follow Him, To bring our lives As a daily offering Of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears, My heavy load He chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow was torn, 'Yet not My will, But Yours,' He said. & *CHORUS*

Come see His hands and His feet, The scars that speak of  
sacrifice; Hands that flung stars into space  
To cruel nails surrendered. & *CHORUS*

So let us learn how to serve, And in our lives enthrone Him;  
Each other's needs to prefer, For it is Christ we're serving. &  
*CHORUS*

**OPENING PRAYER** From Heaven You came helpless babe..  
Entered our world your glory veiled... Not to be served but to  
serve & give Your life..that we might live... This morning we say  
aloud that You Lord are our God... the servant King.  
God Father, Son & Holy Spirit... majesty enthroned on High..  
resplendent in glory & authority... Yet God who would  
purposefully & lovingly veil Your glory & come down among us... to  
bear our heavy load...to rescue us from sin & death... by taking  
that sin & death upon yourself....  
Lord God, King & Saviour... we worship You now & pray that You  
would forgive us afresh for those things in our lives... in us that  
grieve you... we confess our sins in the silence ...asking for  
forgiveness through Jesus...  
Lord we look once more on your hands & your feet... remembering  
that You surrendered Yourself to the cross that we might know  
mercy & forgiveness ... In & through the work of Jesus our sins  
are forgiven...amen

**Old Testament Reading Isaiah 64:1-9**

Oh, that you would rend the heavens & come down, that the  
mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs  
ablaze & causes water to boil, come down to make your  
name known to your enemies & cause the nations to quake before

you! For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you  
came down, & the mountains trembled before you. <sup>4</sup> Since ancient  
times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any  
God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.  
<sup>5</sup> You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who  
remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them,  
you were angry. How then can we be saved? <sup>6</sup> All of us have  
become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like  
filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins  
sweep us away. <sup>7</sup> No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold  
of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us  
over to our sins. <sup>8</sup> Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the  
clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>9</sup> Do  
not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our  
sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

**New Testament Reading 1 Cor 1; 3-9** <sup>3</sup> May God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. <sup>4</sup> I  
always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has  
given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Through him,  
God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your  
eloquent words and all of your knowledge. <sup>6</sup> This confirms that  
what I told you about Christ is true. <sup>7</sup> Now you have every  
spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our  
Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> He will keep you strong to the end so that  
you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus  
Christ returns. <sup>9</sup> God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he  
says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

**Sermon-** I once read about a woman who was in a shopping centre & she noticed a boy standing impatiently at the bottom of an escalator... the boy was looking a bit worried and so the woman went over to him and asked him if he was lost.... As the boy looked up at her he said... Oh no ... I'm just here waiting for my chewing gum to come back down.. I stuck it on the escalator..

This week in the Church calendar we enter the season of Advent.. **Slide 1** a time of waiting & preparation.. as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas ...And as we WAIT , looking forward to that promised time when Jesus has said He will return to earth... as Saviour & King... to make all things NEW And so this morning our Bible readings lead us to consider the important themes of TIME & WAITING...

Of course if we are honest not many of us like to wait, do we? We are living in an age when many have generally got used to Credit Cards... Click & Collect ..Fast food... & TV on demand.... And so we find it strange if we are asked to wait for more than a few minutes... And yet, I don't have to tell you that, this year has been very different... Yes this year MOST people have been forced to SLOW DOWN... **Slide 2** Most have been at different times Locked down... people have been furloughed.. people have been self isolating... And people have been forced to queue for everything from prescriptions to toilet roll.... Yes this has been a year like No other & as we approach the end of 2020.. The waiting continues for now we wait in longing & hope for the Roll Out of a vaccine.... We wait impatiently wanting things to get

back to something more normal... **Slide 3** like Isaiah in our Old Testament reading we long from for God to '*burst from the heavens and come down!*' Yes we yearn for things to be made right and we would like it done right away. And yet could it be that a time of waiting is perhaps important...? Might we need time, to really come to a place of understanding of just how deep our need is...? Or could it be that being forced to WAIT... might do something significant in us..? Why is waiting important?

To try and answer some of these questions let's look at our New Testament reading in more detail... This passage is taken from 1 Corinthians where we hear the Apostle Paul as he begins to write to the troubled Christian community in Corinth. Now back in Paul's day Corinth had a bad reputation for immorality... we might say that Corinth was the Amsterdam or Bangkok of its day...only worse. And if we were to read Paul's entire letter to the Christians there we would find that sadly the Church in Corinth had developed many problems with division, misuse of spiritual gifts & yes immorality. One thing is for sure the believers in Corinth were not a perfect bunch...far from it...

And yet Paul writes to them in hope... Why? Well because he seeks to look at them through God's eternal eyes... eyes that take in the past & the future as well as the present... So while Paul will have some strong NECESSARY words of CORRECTION to say to the Christians in Corinth later in this letter...He doesn't start there.... **SLIDE 4** No he actually begins by calling them *holy*, that is set apart for God, vs 2 And then in verse 4 Paul goes

on to thank God for them and he notes that they have been *'enriched in every way'* vs 5 through Jesus Christ... Yes despite the problems among the believers in Corinth ..Paul is hopeful...

For despite problems in the present Paul is clear that the people he is writing too have actually experienced God working in their lives... they have been made holy because of Christ Jesus vs 2 God has already done a VITAL work in their lives. So Paul could refer to them as, the preacher John Stott said, as *'the flower in the garbage dump' that is the Church of God in Corinth'*. Yes their lives may have still have some of the aroma of the dump that surrounded them... but Paul was sure something important had happened in their past... they had trusted in Jesus and so had been forgiven and made new...

So what is so important about waiting... why does God wait...? Well one answer comes from the apostle Peter in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter where he tells us that **Slide 5** *'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* 2 peter 3:9 Yes waiting gives people time.. Time to understand our need... Time to learn lessons.... Time to RESPOND to God's generous offer of grace through Jesus Christ...

I read recently of an American Minister who was waiting in line to have his car filled with petrol at an old attended filling station like they have in the States... It was just before a long holiday

weekend and the line for petrol was long even though the attendant was working quickly... Finally, the attendant motioned the Minister toward a vacant pump and said.. *"Reverend," "I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip."* The minister just chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

Yes God graciously gives us time.... He doesn't demand that we have everything sorted as soon as we start coming to Church.. or that we are perfect before we become a member.. No God gives us time... And God calls us to use that time well....

I remember the first time I was travelling to India getting a long list prepared of things I needed to do & items I needed to buy... Injections for this and that... malaria tablets to arrange... cooler clothing & a few books about India ... It took a while for me to get equipped & ready to go... **Slide 6** As Paul continues to look at these Christians in Corinth he notes that they *'have every spiritual gift (they) need as (they) eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ* vs 7. Yes God has equipped them for where they are now... In fact as Paul would have to say later in this letter some of these Corinthian Christians had been equipped so much that they had got a little carried away with the gifts that they had been given ! Nevertheless Paul celebrates the fact that God has given them spiritual gifts to use & now he wants them to use those gifts wisely. We don't like waiting ...we don't like studying... we don't like practising... at least not many of us do... But these are important things & God doesn't want us to

neglect them... For no matter what age we are...we can still learn, grow & serve... Waiting gives us time to develop our gifts & find our purpose... Some people are fortunate that they have a very clear focus & vision for their lives from early on.... they want to be a teacher or an engineer or whatever... others take longer to find their place and learn their skills .... But whether we feel we know our vocation early on or whether it takes longer... or whether somewhere along the line things change & unexpectedly our lives take a different turn.... We need time to develop & grow our gifts under God...We need time to be ready to serve God in certain ways in certain places... & God often makes us wait... before He will open a door to a certain role... or relationship... or opportunity, because sometimes we just might not be ready for it

I never in my life thought I would find myself there but there I was a nervous shy guy from the Woodvale in Belfast walking into a slum area in Mumbai (Bombay), about to make my home there for 6 months.. And I remember the quizzical cautious looks I got from many of the residents in Tulsiwadi.. for I certainly looked a bit out of place... But as days went by and turned into weeks and months they gradually not only got used to me but they were generally supportive... by sticking at it...living with them..in their place... I had gradually built a bit of TRUST... **SLIDE 7** As Paul continues writing to the Christians in Corinth he tells them in verse 8 that *God will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus*

**Christ returns.** Yes waiting also gives us the opportunity to really get to know God better... we get to experience His faithfulness..& so we slowly learn to TRUST & OBEY... For you see God's goodness, His faithfulness has never been the issue... the issue is with us... it's us who have grown up learning that we need to look after ourselves ... it's us who struggle with grace as we have a natural tendency to try & work our way to heaven through our own steam.

So yes, often we need to made to wait... to be given time...time to understand our need and hopefully to respond to God generous call to grace... Time to learn our place and to develop our gifts and discover how we can best serve God with our lives.... And Time to experience God's faithfulness... Time for our trust in Him to grow deeper and more solid.... Time for Him to work with us & in us .... Yes we need time....

This morning let's take a moment now to WAIT on the Lord and as we do we remember the promise given through the prophet Isaiah **Slide 8** to those who wait on God... that '***the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run & not be weary; they shall walk & not faint.*** Isa 40:31 Prayer. Lord help us to wait well... not just marking time... but growing in faith.... developing our gifts & serving better... And learning to love You more.... amen

Prayers for Others

So we continue in Prayer as we pray for our world.... Lord God sometimes we look at our world...at the wars...poverty...injustice and indeed this year at the Covid pandemic and we wonder where You are... Loving God alert us to Your presence working, often silently, away in the midst of many difficult situations... And we bring to God our prayers for PEACE, JUSTICE & HEALING in our world.....& we say together... *Your kingdom come.*

Lord we look at your Church and at times we see division, apathy and complacency.... Lord forgive us & stir our hearts again with the genuine love for You & others that only Jesus can bestow... & we bring to God our prayers for UNITY, COMPASSION & COURAGE for our Churches & we say together ..*Your kingdom come.*

Lord we look at people's lives and we see so much need, so much cruelty and fear, so much pain & suffering ... Lord move among us we pray & bring your hope and healing through Jesus ... And we bring to God those who have requested our prayers... especially... Jean & Gerry..... Margaret.... Maureen... Nan... Kate & Gary... And this morning especially for 9 month year old Adrianna after a series of difficult operations...

And we gather our prayers together as we say the Lords prayer.  
*Our Father...*

Worship- These are the days of Elijah

These are the days of Elijah, Declaring the word of the Lord  
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,  
Righteousness being restored

And though these are days of great trial, Of famine and darkness and sword, Still, we are the voice in the desert crying  
'Prepare ye the way of the Lord!'

***Behold He comes riding on the clouds,  
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;  
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,  
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.***

These are the days of Ezekiel, the dry bones becoming as flesh;  
And these are the days of Your servant David, Rebuilding a temple of praise.

These are the days of the harvest,  
The fields are as white in Your world,  
And we are the labourers in Your vineyard,  
Declaring the word of the Lord!

***Behold He comes riding on the clouds,  
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;  
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,  
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes. X2***

Benediction- Lord give us grace to wait in expectation and hope, help us use the time You have given us for Your glory...

And we share in the grace together... May the grace of our Lord  
Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy  
Spirit be with us all for evermore. Amen