

Notices

Good morning and a very warm welcome to Tyndale on this First Sunday in Advent. Whether you are joining us from home, or you are here with us at Tyndale, a regular attendee, or a visitor, you are all very welcome.

This morning our service is being taken by John Briggs, who is well known to us all and a member of Tyndale. John, we thank you very much for leading our service today and look forward to spending this time together in worship.

The notices for this week include our Tuesday Coffee Shop, which is held here in the sanctuary, from 10am until 12noon. Do come along and enjoy refreshments and conversation and time together.

Time@Tyndale this Wednesday is an Advent Reflection. As usual the evening is being held here in the sanctuary, with the doors opening at 7.30pm for refreshments, and the Reflection starting at 8pm. Do join us, which I am sure will be a thought provoking and fun evening as we enter into the period of Advent.

Then the week after on Wednesday the 8th December at Time@tyndale, we have the Bristol Brass Consort coming for the evening. Regulars to Time@tyndale will know the Bristol Brass Consort band have often played for us, and it is always a very entertaining evening, so do put the date in your diary.

On Thursday morning at 11 am we have our online coffee shop time. The details are on the church website for those of you who are free and able to join in this time of conversation.

Thank you.

We have come together as the family of God, in our Father's presence.

We come to offer him our praise and thanksgiving,

To hear and receive his Holy Word,

To bring before him the needs of the world,

To pray for the forgiveness of our sins,

And to seek his grace, that through his Son Jesus

Christ, we may give ourselves to his service

And so we pray together:

DELIVER us, good Lord, when we draw near to you from all coldness of heart, all wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thought and kindled desire we may worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

On this first Sunday in Advent we light our first Advent candle after which the singers will lead us in singing a song of hope from Brazil: 'Come to be our hope, Lord Jesus'

Our morning Psalm

When the Messiah comes, he shall judge the people with righteousness

And rescue the children of the needy.

In his time, righteousness shall flourish,

And peace prevail in all the earth.

He will deliver the needy when they cry,

And the poor man that has no helper.

He shall redeem the souls of the needy from deceit and violence,

And precious shall be their lives in his sight.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel

Who alone does great wonders.

Blessed be his glorious name for ever,

And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. [Psalm 72, selections]

Song: Make way, make way, for Christ the King

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

Lord God we worship and adore you as the God who comes.

You are not far off from the world you created but come to us day by day, blessing us with your presence.

We thank you that you came in Jesus Christ, taking our flesh, incarnate in our world of weakness and need,

That he did not count it too costly to die for us on the cross,

That you came in power to raise him from death a foretaste of the new life you have prepared for all of your creation.

We thank you that now in our time, each day you come by your Spirit, gently and powerfully working in the lives of men and women, the undeclared saints of our own time.

And we look forward to the end of time when all human institutions fail and when you will come in power, in mercy and redeeming love to call us to yourself,

So Advent God, grant us grace always to welcome your coming. Come Lord Jesus, come. AMEN.

And a Prayer of Confession:

Merciful God, we confess to you now that we have sinned.

We confess the sins that everybody knows
And those secret sins that nobody knows –
the sins that are a burden to us
And the sins we have got so used to that they no longer bother us.
We confess our sins as a company of your people –
That we have not loved one another as Christ has loved us.
We have not given ourselves in love and service for the world
As Christ gave himself for us.
Father forgive us,
Send the Holy Spirit that he may give us power to live as, by your mercy, you have called us to live,
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. AMEN

Listen, Here is good news, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
To forgive us in our failure
To accept us just as we are
To set us free from evil's power and make us what he intended us to be.
Listen to him, for through Him
The Father says to all who have come to him as we have come to him,
'You are accepted, you are forgiven, I have set you free'
Thank you Lord,

and now as a people whose sins have been forgiven and are made one with the whole people of God, we say together
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 forever. Amen

OT Lesson: [Isaiah 40: 1-11](#)

Hymn: Come Thou Long expected Jesus [BP&W 139]

NT Lesson: [Luke 4: 14-30](#)

Offering and Grace

In this moment we pause to recognise the gifts we each bring to our common life, offering our money, time and talents for the building of God's Kingdom through Tyndale and beyond.

And so we share the grace with each other:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen

Hymn:

We find you Lord in others' needs,
We see you in our brothers;
By loving word and kindly deeds
We serve the Man for others

We look around and see your face
Disfigured, marred, neglected;
We find you Lord in every place
Where people are rejected.

We offer all that we can do
Our loving gifts and labour
And what we do, we do to you
Incarnate in our neighbour

And so in refugee and those
To whom no help is offered
The Christ with reverence and love
today may be encountered

May all who need Christ's healing touch
Find hands outstretched to help them
So through his church may Christ be found
To comfort and to strengthen [Giles Ambrose, Altered]

SERMON

A text for Advent Sunday - from the beginning of John's gospel, ch 1 v11/12: 'Christ came to his own, but his own people would not accept him, but to all who did accept him, to those who put their trust in him, he gave the right to become the children of God'. At once a text about grace and rejection. So on this Advent Sunday we focus on the coming of Jesus, but I want to suggest to you that this has three tenses – He came, He will come, He comes today. The children of Israel had waited long for the coming Messiah for this was the very goal of their cherished history that filled them with hope – and for some that hope was indeed fulfilled in his coming. At his birth, both simple shepherds from Bethlehem and wise men from afar, come to worship. But rejection is also there with the murderous intent of Herod, the puppet king in this Roman province, who in his intent to eliminate this apparent challenger to his rule, engages in the slaughter of the innocents, causing Jesus to seek safety in Egypt, at once identifying with successive generations of refugees.

Then there is that account of Jesus' preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth which we had in our gospel reading, a passage which ought to make every preacher fearful of their task. Look first at verses 21 and 22. Jesus has just read from Isaiah 61 wonderful words about the messianic task, commenting: '**Today** this scripture has been fulfilled in you hearing'. And the congregation liked that - they liked cheerful preaching relevant to their present circumstances - 'Today' was a good word to hear, and Luke records 'All spoke well of him and were amazed at his gracious words'. But fast forward and see how the sermon ends - - v 28: 'then all were filled with rage.' They got up drove the preacher out of town and took him to a cliff edge with the intent of hurling him off it to his death but Jesus passed through the midst of them and went on his way'. But why the change - truth to tell Jesus was not very good at confining God's healing power to the Jewish nation, so in his sermon Jesus had given the congregation a bit of Bible study - telling them that in a time of famine, Elijah did not exercise his ministry of compassion in Judaea or even Galilee, but went instead to a widow who lived over the border near Sidon in the southern Lebanon. Similarly though there were many lepers in Israel in Elijah's day he did not heal any of them, but only Naaman, the Syrian. The congregation's argument was really with God, but they took it out on the preacher who revealed their ethnic prejudices.

And that was not the only occasion when Jesus' teaching provoked his hearers to violence. In John 8 Jesus challenges his hearers, who make much of their descent from Abraham, and says: 'If you were Abraham's children you would be doing what he did, but instead you are trying to kill me.' And twenty verses later we read: 'they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid and left the temple'. And you may well ask what kind of piety this was to act in such a way on sacred ground.

Now you all know how the story ends - with the Jewish authorities setting up a mock trial and then getting the Roman authorities to do their dirty work for them, authorising the crucifixion – 'He came unto his own but his own received him not'. But there on the cross the second part of John's prediction comes true: 'but to all who did accept him, to those who put their trust in him, he gave the right to become the children of God' And so his reply to the repentant criminal who pleads, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' – 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. In all this I would not want my words to be interpreted as anti-Semitic – history has had too much of that – suffice it to say that we too, in the Christian Church, may be described as 'his own', and we too have the capacity to reject him, to fail to take his mission and ministry seriously, and to indulge in an ugly Christian exclusiveness. Of that we too must take care.

But on this first Sunday in Advent we are also encouraged to look forward to Jesus' coming again, and that is more difficult, for whilst the gospels teach this as a certainty, they warn us against trying to guess God's timetable. So when the disciples ask the question 'When?' the reply they get is 'About that day or hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father. Take care then - watch and pray'

But notwithstanding that warning, the history of the church is littered with stories of disappointed expectations of Christ's return. With some justification, some of the surviving disciples recalled these words when Jerusalem fell to the Romans with great loss of life in AD70, which led to the destruction of the temple, which Jesus had certainly foretold. Further loss of life took place three years later when the remaining Jewish rebels who had gathered in the stronghold of Masada - almost 1,000 of them - committed mass suicide. Such terrible calamities certainly seemed to chime with some of the prediction of the time of troubles which would precede the return of Christ. And so it has been in following periods of threat and distress: famine and pestilence in the middle ages, the violence of cavaliers and roundheads during the English civil war, the French and the Russian Revolutions, to cite but a few occasions.

More than 60 years ago we lived in troubled times. It was the time of the Suez crisis and the failed Hungarian uprising, when we heard on our radios the chilling pleas of Mr Nagy, the Hungarian prime minister, seeking help from the west just before the Russian soldiers took advantage of the international situation to put down the uprising, and soon Mr Nagy, that brave prime minister seeking democracy, was put to death, and Hungary had to live for another 30 years under Russian control. At that time I was a young officer in the RAF and I met a man, a retired cavalry officer, named Captain Hartley who by then was in his seventies. He ran a sprightly Morris Minor, but one day he told me he had sold his car because he would have no further use for it because he was sure that the Lord Jesus was shortly to return to the world at the end of the ages. So Captain Hartley sold his car and gave the proceeds to missionary work, whilst I completed my national service before going up to Cambridge.

Not for us to know the heavenly timetable of Christ's return, though many will find, in international news and climate change predictions, indications that we are again nearer to Christ's second coming than our fathers were. Be that as it may, the advice remains simple: 'Watch and Pray', to be alert, to be ready **whenever** Christ may return. Meanwhile the teaching about the Second Coming gives Christians the hope that all history is in God's hands, even when contemporary events seem chaotic and bent on disaster, situations all too graphically depicted in Matthew 24 and Luke 13. It affirms that history it is not purposeless, but moving to a predetermined end, when Christ's kingdom of righteousness will be finally established. In this hope, Christians, suffering acute persecution or those battling with debilitating illness, have found comfort and a joyful expectation of a better world yet to come as faith and trust give birth to hope.

So we look back to Christ's coming in humility in the manger in Bethlehem but also look forward to his returning, his coming again, coming in glory as finally his great light penetrates the darkness of this world's trials and tribulations. But there is also a third tense to Christ's coming – the present tense – his coming to us now.

Though perhaps over-used Tolstoy's story about Martin, the cobbler, makes real Jesus' teaching about the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, with its vital affirmation: 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers you have done it unto me'

Martin Avdeitch was an elderly but devout cobbler who worked in a basement workshop so his only view of other people was as feet on the pavement outside often in shoes familiar to him for he had either made or repaired them.. As Martin slept one night he thought he heard the voice of God telling him that He would visit him the next day. The next morning Martin sceptically watched for God out of his window. While he was searching for God he saw an old army veteran, Stepanitch, shovelling away snow. Martin invited him in for a warm drink and they talked for a while. Later, Martin saw a young woman outside with a baby not properly dressed for the cold. He invited her in for some food, and gave her warmer clothes and money. Later he saw a young boy stealing from an older lady. He went outside and settled their argument as he extended love and compassion towards the both of them. That night while Martin wondered why God had not visited him, the people he had helped appeared in his home, indicating that in helping them the old cobbler had done what God wanted of him and that God had indeed visited him in them.

Now whilst Martin learnt to see the presence of Christ in those who needed help, for their part they too saw the hand of Christ in the old man who provided vital assistance. It's there in the hymn we sometimes sing: 'Brother, sister, let me serve you; let me be as Christ to you'.. In us, Christ's body, the church, is to be found engaging in a ministry of radical compassion – may be in small things but small things filled with large significance – cooking an extra couple of portions to take to an elderly neighbour who is house-bound, a phone call to the lonely, a hospital visit, not simply inviting your friends to coffee but the isolated and the lonely, or if you have a car and your neighbour does not, taking them to the supermarket, or shopping for them, – all very little things but little things which can make a big difference. . Of course, there are larger tasks to be undertaken, but the little things are a good place to start: and so our prayer 'Come Lord Jesus, come and let willing hearts receive you, now'. Amen.

HYMN: Lift up your heads ye mighty gates [BHB82]

INTERCESSIONS

Peace and Justice: Lord, so often the headlines on the news terrify me : power abused in so many places at the expense of the poor and distressed; too many situations where human ambition and selfishness violently force their will on others; so much distress that we do not know how to pray. But now we lift our broken world up to you asking you to prosper all who are working for justice and peace, naming before you countries like Myanmar, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan , Syria and Hong Kong, praying all who seek an end to injustice and proper respect for all peoples, remembering all who now live in exile from their home land. And remembering this week's news we ask you to stop the trafficking of desperate people at great risk on the high seas trying to come to this country

And so we pray,

Come Lord Jesus, come

Care of Creation: Lord, you set us at the heart of your good creation but we have abused your gifts terribly so that today the whole created order stands at risk. We thank you for the recent meeting of global leaders in Glasgow and we pray that the best ambitions of those who met there may be properly realised by effective action, and proper solidarity with those peoples likely to suffer most. Help us to be more careful about what we consume, about what we eat, what we buy, and how we travel . Teach us to live more simply than others may simply live. May we so care for the natural world that our children and their children may still enjoy this masterpiece of our Creator God.

And so we pray,

Come Lord Jesus, come

City of Bristol: Bless, we pray, our city and all who live and work here. Guide our mayor and all who govern us – help them to make wise decisions even when resources seem insufficient. Help us all to live in harmony with one another, and take care of the least fortunate in our city. In particular we pray for your blessing on the churches of Bristol ‘s night shelter programme and for the work of organisations such as Bristol Street Pastors, Emmaus , St Mungo’s and the North West Bristol Food-bank and the care they give to those in need.

And so we pray,

Come Lord Jesus, come

For the witness of this church: We pray for this fellowship as it stands at a critical point in its history as it makes vital decisions about its witness after so many months of restriction. Guide its deacons and officers as they seek to discern your will for its future. Bless and guide Michael and Rachel as they come to the end of their ministry here and guide them as they look to opening a new chapter in their lives’ service. And begin to guide us, we pray, as we begin the processes of seeking your mind as to who our next minister should be, but meanwhile keep us faithful in our witness here.

And so we pray,

Come Lord Jesus, come

For ourselves: On this first of days we lay before you all the coming week and what it may contain: good news and not such good news, joyful times and perplexing times. Bless we pray all our planning and our doing, our caring and our sharing, our loving and our living. Grant that when so many concerns demand our attention we may find quiet time and space to be with you and to hear your voice.

And so we pray,

Come Lord Jesus, come.

HYMN: Colours of day dawn into the mind [BP&W 568]

PRAYER OF DISMISSAL:

Grant, Lord that what we have said and sung with our lips, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and always.

AMEN