

Prayers and Readings for Private Use

Sunday 29 November 2020 – First Sunday in Advent

By using this sheet at home, you are joining other local Christians in the worship of God and sharing in our common prayer at a time of national need. You may like to light a candle as you pray.

“Watch at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man”

Luke 21.36

Approaching God

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

In the light of Christ’s coming let us confess our sins.

Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.

We have wounded your love,
and marred your image in us.

We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon
and forgiveness of all our sins,
time for amendment of life,
and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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

Listening for God: Mark 13 24-27, 32-37

Jesus speaks of the coming of the Son of Man

“But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Thought for the Day

The word 'Advent', from the Latin word 'adventus' means 'coming'. During Advent we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world. But where is God in the darkness of our world, in the realities we face, in the uncertainties we sign up to by being followers of the Lord? How do the readings for the first Sunday in Advent re-assure us and is there reason for hope?

Watch and wait, be alert, said the Lord. In times of suffering, the followers of the Lord must remain faithful to his message and deeds. They must learn to stand up to the deceit and darkness of the world even when it seems they are losing the battle. They must learn that suffering is not the last word. They must learn to interpret what was happening in the world with hearts that believe in the ultimate triumph of love. They must have hope. The Christian hope is hope in the power of God.

We live with the tension of what some theologians call the 'already, but not yet'. In other words we have indeed experienced the salvation of our God through the coming of Jesus, but on the other hand we await and work for its culmination as we anticipate a radical newness not yet experienced.

So we watch not the sky but the world around us, recognising the presence of God in our lives and in our world, seeking life and truth, seeking to minister in our own individual ways, being alert to further God's work in the world wherever the opportunities present themselves.

Where is God this Advent? He is here among us wherever there is goodness, kindness and love. He is in the small acts of kindness which light up our lives: the thoughtful word, the concern and awareness of the needs of others, the little courtesies which bring grace.

Response

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord.

Prayers

Let us pray

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,

That God may establish among the nations his sceptre of righteousness,

That God may bind up the brokenhearted, restore the sick and raise up all who have fallen,

That the light of God's coming may dawn on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,

That, with all the saints in light, we may shine forth as lights for the world.

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father, praying:

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ first came to seek and to save the lost; so may he come again to find in us the completion of his redeeming work; for he is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

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.

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son, give us grace to prepare for life eternal. Amen.