

## WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

### Call to Worship:

O God, you have called us to power.  
But not a power that shouts, rather, a power that invites –  
because this is your power: a power to call all to be with all.  
In this power, we find room, we make room, and we are made whole.  
Amen.

### Hymn Teach us to dance to the beat of the drum– Title (StF 477 )

Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart,  
teach me to move in the power of your Spirit,  
teach me to walk in the light of your presence,  
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.  
Teach me to love with your heart of compassion,  
teach me to trust in the word of your promise,  
teach me to hope in the day of your coming,  
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart

1 You wrote the rhythm of life,  
created heaven and earth;  
in you is joy without measure.  
So, like a child in your sight,  
I dance to see your delight,  
for I was made for your pleasure,  
pleasure.

2 Let all my movements express  
a heart that loves to say 'yes,'  
a will that leaps to obey you.  
Let all my energy blaze  
to see the joy in your face,  
let my whole being praise you,  
praise you.

**Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) and Steve Thompson**

### Prayer:

We know that in coming towards you,  
you came towards us first.  
You called us by name,  
bringing us deeper into you, into community, into love.  
We thank you for the gift of this,  
and hold our hands humbly,

offering you what we  
have,  
knowing that you receive  
what we give –  
even when it is very little



We lift up our hands.

**We lift up our voices.**

We lift up our hearts.

**We lift up our lives.**

Search us, O God, and bring us deeper

**into the justice of your life-giving Word.**

Call us, O God, into knowing more of life –

**your Word is life, so may we find life with each other.**

We rejoice in your never-failing invitation

**to celebrate and engage with your welcome.**

God of justice,

Justice is your name.

We who call ourselves yours

have often left justice at the door –

preferring words to action.

O God, we have done wrong.

May we pick up justice,

and hold it in our hands as we turn back to you.

Support us, O God, in our justice,

and in our turning towards **justice.**

**Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer** - Our Father.....Amen

### Today's Readings:

1 Thessalonians 2 V 9-13

Matthew 23 v 1-12

### Reflection:

In our Epistle Paul writes to the people of Thessalonica to give them a boost. He talks about how Silas, Timothy and himself reacted with the people when they were together. In verse 11 he states that they dealt with the people as 'their father'. The German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that anyone without a good father should procure one. Some people unfortunately have no experience of a father let alone a good one. Paul never the less talks of

being like a father so one assumes that he considers this to be a good example. I wonder if we have been cared for within the church.

Can we think of anyone who has been a father figure to us.

Paul continues that they had 'encouraged, comforted and urged them to live lives worthy of God.

Does this still apply today and if so who should do these things. Is it just the duty of the Minister or should we all be doing our bit.

The word urge conveys urgency. Sometime we think that there is plenty of time and maybe there will be a better opportunity in the future.

As far as ourselves what is urgent. How about not giving up, not being waylaid and not being half hearted.

In the Gospel reading Jesus speaks of the lack of humility of the Rabbies and the pharisees. they dress splendidly and try to outdo each other with their finery. Jesus is promoting the virtue of humility. A leading light in our Dalton Church was pompous to say the least. One occasion when he excelled himself was when he told everyone how humble he was. Well he certainly wasn't and he didn't realise that if he had been he would have kept quiet I think that most of us have something that we are proud of. That is fine until we become conceited about it. Is there anything that you could be in danger of being conceited about. This is something that we all need to be careful about in the coming days.

**Prayer:**

Today, we pray for all who feel isolated.  
In their uniqueness, they may also feel alone.  
This is most of us, some of the time,  
but it is some of us most of the time.  
God of encounter, may we all turn with love and interest  
towards those who have been isolated.  
God of encounter:  
**hear our prayer.**  
**Amen**

**Hymn What a friend we have in Jesus (StF 531 )**

- 1     What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer!**
  
- 2     Have we trials and temptations,  
is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.**
  
- 3     Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge —  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
in his arms he'll take and shield you,  
you will find a solace there.**

**Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819–1886)**

**Blessing:**

God of power and light,  
you have called us into light and friendship.  
Send us, now, into more light,  
with more of the power of friendship.  
This love is the love at the heart of all things –  
that you call us friends.  
Empower us in this friendship, this power, this  
glory.

**Amen.**

**(Prepared by Bob Mantle, CCL No. 315086)**

## WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2020

John15: 9 – 17



**Call to Worship:** “You are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust.”

(Psalm 91:2)

**Prayer:** Lord, we all have memories of war, personal or handed on. We give thanks for all who gave their lives, and suffered for our freedom, and we pray for all who suffer the fear and misery of conflicts across the world today. **Amen.**

### Hymn – By a monument of marble (StF 131 )

- 1 By a monument of marble,  
or a simple wooden cross,  
here we gather to remember  
sacrifice and tragic loss.  
Blood-red poppy petals flutter,  
each a symbol for a life,  
drifting in a crimson curtain,  
shadow of our constant strife.
- 2 Solemn silence now surrounds us  
as we stand in memory.  
Why must factions stir up conflict?  
This eternal mystery  
troubles hearts and stirs the conscience,  
urges us to think again;  
face the curse of confrontation,  
yet reduce this searing pain.
- 3 For the sound of war still thunders  
through our planet, on this day.  
Every hour new victims suffer,  
even as we meet to pray.  
God, we need your help and guidance  
in our constant search for peace.  
Move us on to new solutions  
as we pray that wars may cease.

Marjorie Dobson (b. 1940)

**Prayer:** Come, let us turn to God, who is with us in all our sorrows, who weeps with us as we weep, who binds our wounds, and who lifts our eyes towards the eternal horizon. God is with us let us turn to God with our confessions .....

God of consolation, in all the stories of our lives, you are with us. As we turn to each other, and turn to you, may we give and find all the comfort we need, knowing that it is in such shelter that we can hear your words of forgiveness and peace. **Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer** - Our Father.....Amen

**Today's Readings:** Psalm 91;

**Reflection:** As I grow older, I begin to realise that I do not know a great deal about the two World Wars we think about in our worship today. Like a lot of you, I have grown up going to the local war memorial, buying poppies, having two minutes silence; remembering those who had died, saying prayers and singing probably ‘O God our help in ages past’, and the ones with medals marching away. But the visit to the National Arboretum opened my eyes so much. As we walked round, a sense of peace, and humbleness, yet horror at what mankind can be capable of. Now there are over 300 memorial areas, and too many names to count; but each is no less important than another. Again, on a planned trip to France, we visited several war cemeteries. Row upon row of pristine stone plaques, each telling its own story – a group together who had lost their lives on a ship, or in the same battle, name, age, regiment. Then there were the ones who ‘were known only to God’.

#### **As we pause to remember:**

- *They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the Morning We will remember them.*

#### **Two minutes silence**

*When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.*

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we remember with gratitude, and sadness, all those who gave their lives in the service of their country, for our tomorrows, gave their todays. We ask you to help and strengthen all who have suffered permanent disabilities because of the ravages of war. Help us to live in such a way that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.

Above all, we thank you for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us, to bring us into your family and your kingdom, and bring us finally to our eternal home. Help us so to live with you in this life that it will prepare us for the next. In the name of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reflection 2** - "Greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friends" - by these words Jesus shows, how far love to another should extend, and the disciples will understand more of this in the coming days.

It is rarely necessary to die for the sake of another; though as we know, there are many recollections of people laying down their lives for others. It is particularly poignant at this time of year. We hear that in World War 1, the young men of the villages went to sign up, and together they fought for their country; and often gave their lives.

Genuine love usually involves of sacrifice. As Christians, we are to show unconditional, selfless love to others.

There have been so many challenges for all of us over the last months, and yet God has walked along side us, watched over us and listened to our cries for guidance. Jesus loves us unconditionally, and He has invited us to be his disciples.

Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession:** As we reflect,  
We bring the world to mind, there are conflicts, hardships, disasters, famine, unrest .....

We think of our country – government, local councils, those in the caring professions, those who have kept our country in essentials.....

We think of all who are suffering from Covid19, and the after effects; those in intensive care.....

We think of those friends we have not seen for a long time, or shared fellowship with.....

We finally pray for ourselves .....

Lord, we bring all our prayers and concerns to you, knowing that you hear us. We pray in the name of our loving Saviour,

**Amen.**

### **Hymn – It is God who holds the nations (StF 705)**

- 1 It is God who holds the nations  
in the hollow of his hand,  
it is God whose light is shining  
in the darkness of the land;  
it is God who builds the City  
on the Rock and not on sand:  
May the living God be praised !

- 2 It is God whose purpose summons us  
to use the present hour ;  
who recalls us to our senses  
when a nation's life turns sour ;

in the discipline of freedom  
we shall know God's saving power :  
May the living God be praised !

- 3 When a thankful nation, looking back,  
has cause to celebrate  
those who win our admiration  
by their service to the state ;  
when self-giving is a measure  
of the greatness of the great :  
May the living God be praised !

- 4 God reminds us every sunrise  
that the world is ours on lease :  
for the sake of life tomorrow  
may our love for it increase ;  
may all races live together,  
share its riches, be at peace :  
May the living God be praised !

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

**Prayer –**  
Symbol of sleep long before remembrance,  
God grants you growth where soil is disturbed.  
You flourish amid the scars of our war-torn world,  
rising red on the battlefields, poppy of peace.  
Lord, grant that we may be peaceful people, yet  
prepared.  
Let us not be lulled into sleep-like complacency.  
Disturb the ground of our being, and let our faith  
flourish;  
from the scars of today, bring forth healing for  
tomorrow. **Amen.**

**Blessing:** May today prepare you for tomorrow.  
May you be prayerful in your preparation,  
and daring in your doing.  
May you be wise at work, and foolish at play.  
And may each experience be enriched  
by the knowledge that you are loved by God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**(Prepared by Janet Ladds, CCL No. 315086)**

## WORSHIP AT HOME

**SUNDAY, November 15 2020**

**Call to Worship: Psalm 150:1-6**

Hallelujah!

Praise God in his holy house of worship,  
praise him under the open skies;  
Praise him for his acts of power,  
praise him for his magnificent greatness;  
Praise with a blast on the trumpet,  
praise by strumming soft strings;  
Praise him with castanets and dance,  
praise him with banjo and flute;  
Praise him with cymbals and a big bass drum,  
praise him with fiddles and mandolin.  
Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD!  
Hallelujah.

### **Hymn – Angel voices (StF 39)**

- 1 Angel voices ever singing  
round thy throne of light,  
angel-harps for ever ringing,  
rest not day nor night ;  
thousands only live to bless thee  
and confess thee  
Lord of might.
- 2 Thou who art beyond the farthest  
mortal eye can scan,  
can it be that thou regardest  
sinful woman, man ?  
Can we know that thou art near us,  
and wilt hear us ?  
yea, we can.
- 3 Lord, we know that thou rejoicest  
o'er each work of thine ;  
thou didst ears and hands and voices  
for thy praise design ;  
maker's art and music's measure  
for thy pleasure  
all combine.
- 4 In thy house, great God, we offer  
of thine own to thee ;  
and for thine acceptance proffer  
all unworthily  
hearts and minds and hands and voices  
in our choicest  
psalmody.
- 5 Honour, glory, might, and merit  
thine shall ever be,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
blessèd Trinity.  
Of the best that thou hast given  
earth and heaven  
render thee.

Francis Pott (1832–1909)

**Prayer:**

**We come in quiet to  
worship you today.  
We stand in awe of your  
changing of the seasons  
to the Autumn, soon to  
be winter. It is all done so quietly.  
In the quietness of our homes we sit and confess  
all are wrong doings of this week Lord and help  
us to turn again to you in order that we carry out  
your will in our lives.  
In Jesus name we pray,  
Amen**



**The Lord's Prayer - Our Father.....Amen**

**Today's Reading:**

**Matthew 25v 14-30**

**Reflection**

**On receiving my instructions for my worship at home sheet it was August. It was strange thinking about a reflection that was not going to be seen till November. Everyone has had a difficult time this year and I am no different to anyone else. We celebrated our Mum's funeral just before getting my instructions. I was taken aback when I saw what the lectionary gospel reading was. Jesus telling his disciples the story of the parable of the talent.**

**First it is good to think what a talent is in biblical terms. After doing a bit of searching on the internet I found that it was translated as bags of gold. A talent represented a large sum of money. A lot of older translations used to use the word talent and the parable came to be known as "The parable of the talents". It doesn't tell us how much money the master entrusted to the servants just to say he was giving them a great deal.**

**The master is the main person in this parable who distributes the wealth to his servants to look after while he is away and on his return they are to tell him how they dealt with their portion. This is stewardship and we are all given**

resources. We call our resources our skills and abilities. We as Christians know that we will have to answer for how we invest them as all things come from God and it is to God who we will ultimately answer.

I thought about the three stewards in this reading: The Master was pleased with 2 but he was furious with the third. Which of these three stewards would you like to be when at the end of your life you had to make an account of what you had done with what you had been given?

My mother's eulogy described mum as "A family woman and a Christian life well lived" because even though she was not well towards the end she was still evangelising, as Deacon Kina put it, in Wyndham Manor by distributing their worship at home sheets to other residents so that they could all share in worship. Yes, when I think of those 2 stewards in the parable who did rather well and the third one who got the gnashing of teeth. I know which one I would rather be.

We are all servants of Christ; we all need to show how we use our gifts and abilities to help each other. We are here to show God that we are to take the first step to pass on his gospel of good news and share his commitment to all people. With God's help we will.

Now you are reading this and so much has gone on since August and the time I wrote this worship sheet that I hope you are all still safe and well.

Amen.

#### **Prayer of Intercessions:**

Lord I thank you for the devotion and skill of those who care for us all.

Especially, physicians  
Surgeons and nurses.

Give them strength and grace they need each day  
As they fulfil their high calling to tend and sustain those who depend on them.

May I encourage them  
by cheerful and willing  
co-operation.

In Jesus name we thank you.

Author unknown.

#### **Hymn – Title (StF 594)**

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have come to us,  
you are one with us,  
Mary's Son ;  
cleansing our souls from all their sin,  
pouring your love and goodness in ;  
Jesus, our love for you we sing,  
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have come to us,  
born as one of us,  
Mary's Son ;  
led out to die on Calvary,  
risen from death to set us free ;  
living Lord Jesus, help us see  
you are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we would come to you,  
live our lives for you,  
Son of God.  
All your commands we know are true ;  
your many gifts will make us new ;  
into our lives your power breaks through,  
living Lord.

Patrick Appleford (b. 1925)

#### **Blessing:**

Lord,

Help me to live this day quietly, easily,  
To lean in thy great strength,  
trustfully, restfully.

To await the unfolding of thy will,  
peacefully, patiently, serenely,  
to meet others peacefully, joyously  
to face tomorrow, confidently and courageously.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.

**Prayers from a book Living a day at a time.**

**By Mary Oakley (Used with permission)**

**Lynne C Taylor,( CCL No. 315086)**

## WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2020

### Call to Worship:

Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever.  
Your royal sceptre is a sceptre of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness. (Ps 45)

### Hymn – King of Glory, King of Peace (StF 56)

- 1 King of Glory, King of Peace,  
I will love thee;  
And that love may never cease  
I will move thee.  
Thou hast granted my request,  
Thou hast heard me;  
Thou didst note my working breast,  
Thou hast spared me.
- 2 Wherefore with my utmost art  
I will sing thee,  
And the cream of all my heart  
I will bring thee.  
Though my sins against me cried,  
Thou didst clear me;  
And alone, when they replied,  
Thou didst hear me.
- 3 Seven whole days, not one in seven,  
I will praise thee;  
In my heart, though not in heaven,  
I can raise thee.  
Small it is, in this poor sort  
To enrol thee:  
E'en eternity's too short  
To extol thee.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

### Prayer:

As we draw together to worship let us remember that we are in the presence of a King. Not a king for whom we have to dress up and paint the building, but a King who loves us and comes to us just as we are. So come, Holy Spirit, come, enter this space, enter our hearts and minds and draw us into the presence of our King, the King of Kings. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer** - Our Father.....Amen

### Today's Readings:

Ephesians 1: 15-23

Matthew 25: 31-46



### Reflection:

These weeks before Advent are sometimes referred to as Kingdom time. This story of the sheep and goats that Jesus tells gives us a picture of what relationships might look like in that Kingdom. But this story is not about the ultimate reward we might get for consciously 'doing good'. On the face of it, one group of people are judged acceptable by Christ the King who is at the centre of the picture – the others, are sent out to eternal damnation for failing to be the compassionate caring people God needs us to be. Now, let me ask you a question: how many of you, even just once in your life, have done what Jesus says at the beginning of that passage and fed a hungry person, clothed a naked person or visited a person in prison – remembering that people can be 'imprisoned' by illness or disability, unable to enjoy the freedom we take for granted, as much as by criminal behaviour? That's wonderful – you're all good sheep! Now, how many of you have walked past a homeless person, failed to give clothing to a person who needed it, or not visited someone who felt like they were in some sort of prison – that's too bad – you're all bad goats!

So could that mean that we're all destined for an eternity out in the cold? Well, maybe Jesus is in reality talking not about specific places, but rather about symbols for states of being that we have all experienced. How it feels when we live as citizens of that Kingdom serving Christ in our neighbours and how it feels when we put ourselves at the centre instead. How did you feel when you last gave without counting the cost – of your time, your energy, your money? When we act with genuine generosity or extend real hospitality, it makes us feel good, purposeful, fulfilled. That we could meet the gaze of Jesus without shrinking away. But how did you feel when you walked past the homeless person sleeping in that shop doorway – or when you crossed the road to avoid that man who talks to himself all the time? My guess is that, if you're anything like me, it left you feeling pretty awful. And when we're overwhelmed by shame and

guilt, the sense that we have failed to be all we could be, we alienate ourselves from God's loving presence. We put ourselves in a place of torment.

The central message of the Gospel is that God is love, love that is infinitely beyond our imagining and that reaches out to every single one of us, longing for us both to be transformed by that love and to be co-workers with him, transforming the life of the world.

Perhaps the harsh judgement in Matthew 25: v 46 is one we bring on ourselves. When we deny our true nature and ignore those in need, we suffer terribly and feel like hell. The good news is that God in his love for us only wants to restore us as he restored Peter when he wept after denying Jesus, bringing us peace and healing in his time by helping us become sheep rather than goats.

**Prayer:**

Welcoming God, we pray for those who are strangers to your word. Help us to reach out to them with your love.

Truthful God, we pray for those who hunger for justice and peace. Help us to stand beside them. Loving God, we pray for those who are thirsty for human kindness. Help us to seek our the lonely ad be a refuge for the abused, so that they might be refreshed in you.

Caring God, we pray for those who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Help us to do those things that will help them to be open to your healing love.

Transforming God, we pray for those who are imprisoned in any way. Help us to support them until they can break free.

Searching God, we pray for ourselves. In our acts of love and service remind us of our dependence on our love so that we might find our strength in you alone and on the day of judgement be found righteous. Amen

**Hymn – The Kingdom of God (StF 255)**

1 The kingdom of God  
Is justice and joy,  
For Jesus restores  
What sin would destroy;

God's power and glory  
In Jesus we know,  
And here and hereafter  
The kingdom shall grow.

2 The kingdom of God  
Is mercy and grace,  
The prisoners are freed,  
The sinners find place,  
The outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share,  
And hope is awakened  
In place of despair.

3 The kingdom of God  
Is challenge and choice,  
Believe the good news,  
Repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
Brought Christ to his cross,  
Our crisis of judgement  
For gain or for loss.

4 God's kingdom is come,  
The gift and the goal,  
In Jesus begun,  
In heaven made whole;  
The heirs of the kingdom  
Shall answer his call,  
And all things cry glory  
To God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

**Blessing:**

Christ awaits us in the world, hungry, homeless, lonely and afraid. So let us go, love him and cherish him, tend him and care for him, wherever and in whoever we meet him and the blessing of God rest upon us. Amen



**WORSHIP AT HOME**  
**SUNDAY 29th November 2020**

**Advent Sunday**

**Call to Worship**

The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together shall see it; for the Lord himself has spoken. *Isaiah 40:5*  
Shout aloud and rejoice; I am coming, and I will make a dwelling among you, says the Lord.

**HYMN O come, O come, Immanuel**

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

O come, O come, O Lord of might  
Who to your tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times did give the law  
In cloud, and majesty, and awe:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel*  
*Shall come to you, O Israel.*

O come, O Rod of Jesse, free  
Your own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell your people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel*  
*Shall come to you, O Israel.*

O come, O Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path of misery:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel*  
*Shall come to you, O Israel.*

O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by your advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds on night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight:  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel*  
*Shall come to you, O Israel.*

**StF - 180 Latin, 18<sup>th</sup> century based on the ancient Advent Antiphons**  
**Translated by John Mason Neale (11811-1866)**

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, we come before you, to worship you in this glad season of Advent –

this season of expectation; of celebration; and above all of preparation.

We come now, because we want to be ready –  
ready to give thanks for your coming;  
ready for all the ways you come to us now;  
ready to welcome you when you come again.

So open our hearts as we worship you,  
so that all we share during this service  
may give us a deeper understanding of this season,  
and a fuller experience of your love.

We pray in Jesus name, as we bring all our prayers together in the words of the prayer he taught us, as we say, "Our Father, who art in heaven..... Amen"

**Bible Readings:**

Isaiah 64:1-9 1 Corin.1:3-9 Mark13:24-37

**Reflection**

Although about 2,500 years have gone by since Isaiah chapter 64 was written - give or take a few years - I'm sure we could all agree that it could well have been written yesterday. All around, the prophet then, saw sin, uncleanness and people destroying themselves by their wickedness and evil.

Is our world so different? I sadly think NOT! The writer longs for God to intervene, to "tear open the heavens and come down" (v1 NRSV). The constant expectation of the Bible is that God will come, to judge the world and redeem his people: wrong will be righted; the wreckers will be brought to book; and God's plan to save the world will be completed.

In the New Testament, the coming of God becomes the coming of Jesus, as we see from our reading from the first letter to the Corinthians. This brief passage from Paul gives us a taste of the way in which, for him, the future 'revealing' or 'appearance' of Jesus formed the essential horizon of Christian life – the 'end' towards which we work, the 'end' towards which we prepare ourselves and direct our whole existence.

Is this still a credible belief in the twenty-first century? 'Apocalyptic' language like that in today's set Gospel reading from Mark 13:24-37 doesn't fit very well with a modern scientific outlook, which tells us that stars can't 'fall from heaven'.

But we shouldn't let this put us off, because we need to look behind the language and ask why the New Testament writers, and Jesus himself – insisted on the 'end' towards which the world is apparently steaming!

The answer emerges from, not just the short passage set for the day, but the whole of chapter 13 of Mark. For here in this chapter, we see three things, all of vital importance for our Christian message today:

*First, the presence of God.*

God is not distant from his world, but knows it! This is implied simply by the predictions that Jesus makes. Ultimately, though torn by war and suffering, the world rests in God's hands; and when dreadful, abominable evil occurs 'Watch Out!' Jesus tells his disciples, "the judgement of God is at hand." (v14). Because God is involved with his world, there must be an 'end'. (v13)

*Second, the Proclamation of the Gospel.*

If we ask, "Why doesn't God act in judgement now, because the world is so evil!?" the answer of Mark 13 is, because God wants to SAVE the world, rather than judge it, and there must be time for the Gospel to be preached to all nations (v10). However, for the same reason, there must one day be final salvation, ultimate deliverance from sin and suffering for a damaged world.

*And thirdly, we have the Coming of God's Son.*

This is the focus of the last part of the chapter, our Gospel. The 'Son of Man' comes to put into effect, the judgement and deliverance that God plans for his world. Whatever happens to the heavenly bodies, this is the world's horizon, and we need to be ready. (v33-37)

So use this Advent wisely, prepare for his coming into your hearts once more, and be ready, that God may find all that he seeks in us and the world, even as we continue our journey through this global pandemic.

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we come at the beginning of this season of Advent to prepare for your coming afresh into our lives, as we remember with gladness, the hope you brought with your ministry, a sense of purpose to those for whom life seemed pointless – the poor, sick, outcasts and broken-hearted – a light shining in their darkness and joy breaking into their sorrow,

So we pray:

for the Church, that she might be faithful in its life and witness;.....

for people in the world we live; that peace may reign in places of conflict;.....

for people who still suffering the effects of the global pandemic;.....

for those sick and unwell, who we name and lift to you in a moments silence.....

Lord, respond to our prayers, as is your will.

Amen

**HYMN      Into the darkness of this world**

Into the darkness of this world,  
Into the shadows of the night;  
Into this loveless place you came,  
Lightened our burdens, eased our pain,  
Ad made these hearts your home,  
Into the darkness once again –  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love, to make us whole,  
Come with your light to lead us on,  
Driving the darkness far from our souls;  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,  
Into these heavy hearts of stone,  
Shine on us now your piercing light,  
Order our lives and souls aright,  
By grace and love unknown,  
Until in you our hearts unite –  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love, to make us whole,  
Come with your light to lead us on,  
Driving the darkness far from our souls;  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

O Holy Child, Emmanuel,  
Hope of the ages, God with us,  
Visit again this broken place,  
Till all the earth declares your praise  
And your great mercies own.  
Now let your love be born in us,  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come in your glory, take your place,  
Jesus, the name above all names,  
We long to see you face to face,  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

**StF- 173   Maggie Dawn (b1953)**

**Blessing**

Know that Christ goes with you.  
Know the bond of fellowship you have in Christ.  
Know the communion of the Holy Spirit.  
Know that God's Word is truth, and it shall not pass away.  
May the Blessing of God Almighty: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, go with us, this day; this Advent and beyond.      Amen

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