

The Methodist Church

Bury St Edmunds Circuit.

Worship Sheet for 29th November 2020
'Advent Sunday'

Welcome to worship

Be still, you may like to light a candle. We will take a few moments to feel the presence of God on this Advent Sunday.



We begin with week one from our Advent Liturgy found on the additional sheet.

Call to Worship

Psalm 80: 1

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you will lead like a flock! You will be enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth, shine forth. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 169 Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pabx6towKE>

1. 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.
2. Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.
3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
4. 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)

Prayer of Praise

Morning Star of God, rising in beauty from the ashes of the night, encourage us your servants who walk in darkness and need the loving touch of your light to lift us into joy.

Be gracious to us, for without your light we are left in our darkness for ever.

Morning Star of God, clothed in unattainable glory, enfold us in your robes of light, that we may stand in gladness before you in the beauty of your presence.

Be gracious to us, for without your light we are left in our darkness for ever.

Morning Star of God, our joy and our desiring come to us we beseech you, shine upon us once again for life is cold without you. Our bodies, minds and spirits ache with longing for the glory of your light.

Be gracious to us, for without your light we are left in our darkness for ever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

As we come now before our sovereign God we thank you for your word freely given to us. Giving us a glimpse of the beauty of our world.

Forgive us that sometimes we are slow to listen. We don't always make time to read your word but allow our interests to take centre place.

Speak to us now,

And give us ears to hear.

Forgive us when we become casual or complacent in our worship. We longer expect you to challenge us or be moved by a sense of awe.

Speak to us now

And give us ears to hear.

Forgive us when grow away from your voice in creation and give no time to ponder or reflect deeper.

Speak to us now

And give us ears to hear.

Speak to us now and give us ears to hear, hearts to listen and eyes to see. Teach us anew when your voice seems silent to listen more closely and rediscover you once more in this advent season.

Amen.

Assurance of pardon

You come to us God when we look away. Forgive us all and let us rejoice once again in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven now and all ways. Thanks be to God, Amen.

Hymn: StF: 177 Lo, he comes with clouds ascending

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlszhvHjBxQ>

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,

Once for favoured sinners slain;

Thousand thousand saints attending,

Swell the triumph of His train:

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold Him
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

The dear tokens of His passion
Still His dazzling body bears;
Cause of endless exultation
To His ransomed worshippers;
With what rapture, with what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen! Let all adore Thee,
High on Thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
Claim the kingdom for Thine own;
O come quickly! O come quickly!
Everlasting God, come down!
(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)

Bible Reading: Mark 13: 24-27

But be alert; I have already told you everything.

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁴ “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷ 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.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he^[a] is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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,³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Reflection

Today is the first Sunday of Advent which marks the time when we start our preparations for Christmas. Not only do we look forward to celebrating the Incarnation when God as the baby Jesus entered human history, but we also look forward to his return, his Second Coming. God said “I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is and who was and is to come” (Rev.1:8). He is the beginning and the end and the creator of all things. Yet because of his gracious love he did come, he entered human history as Jesus Christ to engage with humankind. Bibles often provide timelines so we know the sequence of Old Testament events in Jewish history in which God intervened. He has continued to speak to us and our relationship with God is realized through time. So, we can trust that Christ will return as promised when the time is right. But just as the birth of Jesus occurred in an unexpected way so too will his return.

Mark Chapter 13 is often referred to as the “little apocalypse” because it records Jesus prophesying the future. In verses 9-13 Jesus talks of persecution and the need for the good news to be proclaimed to all nations with words inspired by the Holy Spirit. We know Paul was often given the right words and we have only to read Acts 17 where Paul addresses the Areopagus in Athens to have confidence in the fulfilment of the Lord’s promises. Jesus creates an image of desolation which in hindsight we realize was the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple between AD67 and AD70. After describing the devastation to come Jesus warned that false Messiahs would come to lead believers astray.

Despite that powerful imagery our reading is one that offers hope. After the predicted suffering that we in 2020 can identify with, the “sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” (v 24-26) For those of us who are Christians that is an awesome image but also an amazing promise.

There is a lesson to be learnt from the fig tree. As soon as the branches become tender and leaves appear we know Summer is on the way. So too when the signs Jesus talked about earlier in the chapter occur then the time is near for his return. The early Christians believed that Jesus would come again in their lifetime but gradually the realization dawned that the time was not yet right.

Most importantly we must stay alert because only the Father knows when the Lord will return. His words and guidance along with the Holy Spirit help to prepare us. In a way it is a bit like waiting for Christmas to come, we must prepare ourselves for that special day.

We are facing difficult times but we can know that whatever our lived experiences are Jesus Christ will fulfil his promises. But he didn't just give us hope for the future – he gave us the tools with which we can live our lives constructively, expressing the same kind of devotion Jesus displayed for the Father, together with the love and compassion he showed everyone during his ministry. Through prayer and reading the Gospel our relationship with the Lord will develop bringing us joy and hope as we await his return.

From: Liz Kearsley

Hymn: StF 181 Of the Fathers love begotten

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jICEbS4acQ>

Of the Father's Love begotten
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see,
Evermore and evermore.

Blessed was that day for ever,
When the Virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Saviour of our race;
And the child, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred Face,
Evermore and evermore !

Forever and forever in the Father's love we stand, forever and forever. Amen. X2

O ye heights of heaven adore Him!
Angel-hosts His praises sing!
All dominions bow before Him,
And extol our God and King ;
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Every voice in concert ring,
Evermore and evermore!

*Forever in the Fathers love we stand, forever amen.
Glory be to God the Father,
Glory be to God the Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Persons three and Godhead one.
Glory be from all creation
While eternal ages run
Evermore and evermore.
(Aurelius Clemens Prudentius 348-413)*

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As we stay alert for your coming, Lord strengthen and guide your Church in its mission to the world.
Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As we pray for your world, we remember those who are seeking to bring peace and goodwill among all. We pray for those involved in war or the threat of war. We think of those caught up or living with the consequences of famine, flood or earthquake.
Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As we pray let your presence be known in our homes and in our actions. May our care and concerns be shown in the things we do and say this advent season. May you be seen in us today.
Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As pray we remember all those whose lives are darkened by pain and distress, all those who are struggling with doubt and despair. We pray for those struggling with lockdown and isolation may they feel comforted. We pray for all members of our community who are ill at this time, may they feel healing and peace.
Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As we pray we hold before you all those mourn. May they cast their cares upon you. We pray for the dearly departed that they may dwell in your eternal kingdom

forever and rejoice that they will be with you in your heavenly kingdom.

Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour

As we pray may your light reach the darkest places of the world so that there be hope and not despair, joy not sorrow and love not hatred. Come Lord Jesus, come to us now to bring the good news to all people.

Come Lord Jesus

Come Lord Jesus our Saviour.

Merciful Father, we ask that you accept these our prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

**We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:
Our Father...**

Prayer over our gifts

We bring to you now Lord Jesus ourselves and our gifts on this first Sunday of Advent. May all that we have and all that we bring enable your gospel message to be proclaimed to all the earth. Amen.

Hymn StF Hymn: StF 170 Darkness like a shroud

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHG3YSONGJc>

Darkness Like A Shroud Covers The Earth;
Evil Like A Cloud Covers The People.
But The Lord Will Rise Upon You,
And His Glory Will Appear On You-
Nations Will Come To Your Light.

*Arise, Shine, Your Light Has Come,
The Glory Of The Lord Has Risen On You!
Arise, Shine, Your Light Has Come,
Jesus The Light Of The World Has Come.*

Here Among Us Now, Christ The Light
Kindles Brighter Flames In Our Trembling Hearts.
Living Word, Our Lamb, Come Guide Our Feet
As We Walk As One In Light And Peace,
Till Justice And Truth Shine Like The Sun.

A prayer of dismissal

**As we go on our way we go in the knowledge that
Jesus Christ goes with us, ahead of us and behind us.
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Spirit. Amen.**

THE GRACE

We say together...

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of
God**

**and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all
forever more. Amen.**



*The Visitation, He Qi, used with kind permission. See more at
www.heqiart.com*

Some prayers taken from and by Mary Hathaway, David Adam,
from *Avent, Christmas and Epiphany*, Edited by John Cox.