

Sunday 10th December 2023 (Advent 2)

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Advent 2

Advent is a time of preparing for a new baby, a time to create space for reflection and wonder.

In our Advent journey we prepare for new ideas and new ways, we look forward with fresh inspiration to a time of new family traditions. May we be aware of the need to dust off and tweak so that new ways will emerge.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

Because we've always done it doesn't mean we always must, on our journey may we be open to think again and change the way we live to accommodate this new baby for which we are waiting.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

Tradition is not static, we receive, we review we add and we pass on. May we be ready to review, making space to add new ways as we learn more together. As we encounter and experience things in our preparations may we be ready to let go, ready to pass on a new tradition embracing the place of love in all we do.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

As we light this second candle, may we accept the challenges and changes to our living and our loving that the gift of a baby brings and in our preparations may we be prepared to dust off old ways, learn new ways and become more Christlike. **Amen**

Reading Mark 1:1-8 ([JB Phillips](#))

Reflection

Christmas comes around every year – do you have the same decorations and routine each year or do you change things around, buy new decorations?

Advent comes each year also – an invitation to prepare to make changes. When we use Advent to review and reflect and commit to changes then Christmas becomes a celebration of change which is perhaps the real message of Christmas. Jesus' call to bring the kingdom closer is all about change.

When John heard the call to prepare the way for Jesus he changed his life radically, he threw off the clothes and ways of his family life and dresses in a manner akin to the prophets of old and lived, we are told, on a diet of locusts and honey.

Are we ready for our lives to be turned upside down and to celebrate change because we too are chosen by God?

Are we read to answer the call and follow Jesus, sharing the message of God's love for all people and the need to change the way we do things to bring the kingdom to fulfilment?

Readings Isaiah 40:3-8 ([Living Bible](#))
2 Peter 3:8-15 ([CEV](#))

Reflection

In our reading from Mark we heard something of John the Baptists' story. John became known for his strange clothes and even stranger message and above all for baptising people. John was living out the words of Isaiah, the words we heard read from Isaiah 40.

³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then

the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

I remember doing some Prayer Imaging on this passage and what emerged for me was that the landscape did not change but the way we see it does. God’s love can change our perspective and what we once saw as challenging and difficult becomes, within the presence of God less difficult. The mountains and the valleys of everyday life are levelled out and those climbs and drops, though they still occur, are more manageable and can be seen as opportunities to share our trust in God’s love.

However I think there is something else in this reading. Quantum science is revealing our capacity to change reality. The world we have does not have to be as it is, with imagination and a will for something different we can achieve what we might want to call the Kingdom. The challenging question is how much do we want things to be different? God calls us to be participators in creation, transformers of reality, preparers of a new way of love and justice but that means change, change for us. John the Baptist took this passage from Isaiah seriously, he changed his life, he gave his life trying to change the lives of others. How must our lives change to make Peace on Earth a reality, what must we do to reveal the glory that is the Kingdom of God?

As we wait in Advent how are we living out the words of Isaiah?

What part are you and I playing in preparing the way for the kingdom?

At this time of year it is easy to read/recite/ accept ideas that we would reject at another time. Christian Christmas, and you might argue that there is no other kind, is full of strangeness and mystery and for many on the edge and outside church it is little more than a fairy story; a myth they have grown up with, familiar and wonderful but not to be taken too seriously.

Advent, known outside the church for its calendars with gifts for each day, is for Christians a time of preparation reflecting on the essence of the message of Jesus, the use of love to transform everyone’s experience of life on earth. Advent is a time for concentrating on doing things differently because if we don’t then Christmas means nothing. Advent is about that for which we all hope – Peace on Earth – and it is about discerning our role in preparing for that to be a reality.

So how do we prepare for Peace on Earth and how can we use Advent and Christmas to help others see God and build their own relationship with God?

Here we have a predicament, we are called to cry out ‘here is your God’ but what picture of God do we paint? What picture do others Israel’s view of God was often of a vengeful God; to explain the awful things that had happened to them they wove them into stories of God punishing them, God casting them out, but I believe this is the part of the story that Jesus challenged most, for the picture Jesus painted was a God of love, unconditional love and freewill. What picture do we paint? Do we get a little lazy and allow the picture to be clouded by historical myth rather than echoing the message of Jesus?

Peter writing to the early church is reassuring them that change will happen but in the meantime they are to attend to their own way of life. The way we live is the way we shout out – are we human beings or humans being – are we LOVE? Love is not an object but an action, God is not a being we love directly but the depth present in the very act of love itself. When we lose ourselves in love for others we find God. To lose ourselves in love requires a change of heart and a change of life.

We are called to prepare the way of the Lord, not prepare the way for the Lord, and the way of the Lord is the way of justice and love.

How must I be for that person to be able to reach their God given potential in their life?

What must I do to allow that person to experience justice and love?

It will take longer than advent to begin answering but we can make a start and together we can begin to prepare the way for every human to be, to recognise God in their life and experience the loving way of Jesus. We can begin living as one, held together in the source of all being that we call God, and participating in building a new earth, a new reality of LOVE.

We can use Christmas to talk about the message of Jesus and demonstrate by our actions that we take the message of Jesus seriously enough to change the way we do things.

Psalm 85 (Psalms for a quantum world)

Creator God. Source of all being,
you journey with all people,
embedded within all creation.
Your love is unconditional
and your mercy beyond our imagination.

We read the stories of our ancestors' relationship with you,
their trust in you,
and we long to trust in the same way,
to know you around and within us.

Our lives ebb and flow,
we know joy and heartache
but our oneness in you means we need never fear.
May we see the reality of your presence,
may we hear the song of creation,
may our hearts know your love and mercy.
Through this knowledge, deep within our souls,
we can, in you, change the reality of our world,
building a world of justice and peace,
where all are free to be and know your love.

Creator God, we love you
and in our oneness seek to love all people.

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