

Christ Church Woodley December 6 2020 Advent 2: Communion

Lighting of the Advent Candles

LEADER: We light the second candle here, for the second coming of Christ. He will return, ending pain and fear, restoring the world to life. Jesus, we trust in your return;

ALL: **O come, O come Emmanuel.**
Help us live with patient hope,
O come, O come Emmanuel.

Song: The Holly and the Ivy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFhGxSs17qQ>

The holly and the ivy
Are dancing in a ring
Round the berry-bright red candles
And the white and shining king

And two is for the prophets
And for the light they bring
They are candles in the darkness
All alight for Christ the King

Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

¹ “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

Introductory Poem

Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow.
Refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

When is this coming? Why can we not know
How long we have to wait for your return?
Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow!

Or, help us in the lingering to learn
Your saving way that savours love, and so
Refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow.
Refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

Hymn StF 177 Lo, he comes with clouds descending

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9P9PoQov_g

- 1 Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.
- 2 Every eye shall now behold him
robed in glorious majesty;
we who set at nought and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

- 3 Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears;
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars.
- 4 Sing, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come, Lord Jesus!
Everlasting God, come down!

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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Prayers of Approach

O God, we bring you our failure
Our hunger, our disappointment, our despair
Our greed, our aloofness, our loneliness
When we cling to others in desperation
Or turn from them in fear
Strengthen us in love.
And teach us to use our power with care

**All We turn to you, O God,
 We renounce evil
 We claim your love
 We choose to be made whole.**

O living God
Draw all the fragments of our lives
Into the bright mosaic of your love;
Weave all the tangled threads of our desires
Into the tapestry you are making
From the dark materials of this world;
Let us celebrate
The dazzling colours of your work, and the harmony of your peace.

Your kingdom is already growing in us.
We welcome you in to intervene in our evolution
And to shape the landscape of our lives
After your will.

O lord Jesus Christ
The Way, the Truth and the Life,
Do not let us stray from you, the Way,
Nor distrust you, the Truth,
Nor rest in anything but you, the Life.

You call us to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through
perils unknown.

Give us faith to go out with courage, not knowing where we go, but only that it is your hand
leading us, and your love supporting us.

And heavenly Father, we pray that you stay with us now, as we join together in this
community of faith; show us your guiding light, and let your Holy Spirit rest upon us, rest
among us, and remain in our hearts.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord,

Amen.

Junior Church:

Video: Thwaite Waits. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HumwEU0aBO8>

Junior Church Prayer

Junior Church Hymn Little Donkey <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCwThzzv11U>

Christ Church Woodley December 6 2020 Advent 2: Communion Readings

2 Peter 3:8-15a The day of the Lord will come like a thief

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Mark 1:1-8 The preaching of John the Baptist

¹ The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”-

³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

HYMN StF 167 Colours of day <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwxAi12UiJ0>

1
Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
and let's give the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.*

2
Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness are needing a friend.

3
Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.

Christ Church Woodley December 6 2020 Advent 2: Communion Sermon

The Lord will come and not be slow,
his footsteps cannot err;
before him righteousness shall go,
his royal harbinger.¹

I wonder if you remember that old hymn. However, if you are inclined to doubt pronouncements, you might be thinking, “Not be slow! It’s two thousand years already, so I wouldn’t call it quick exactly.” and some theologians and historians tell us that the disciples expected the kingdom to come any minute, that they were living in the end times, and the second coming would be upon us any moment. It’s been two thousand years, and we are still waiting. Was the whole thing a delusion in the first place? Or is there an explanation? Several have been provided. God is too busy, or God is patient, or God’s sense of time is not like the human one: “a thousand ages in thy sight are but a moment gone.”² To my mind, these explanations are not all that convincing. We live in time, and according to a human scale. When we say “not be slow” that must be about how things feel to humans. It is too difficult for us to adjust to any other measure.

But waiting is tedious. We have waited a bit less than a year for the Coronavirus vaccine, and it’s seemed an age. Then we are told patiently, that normally such vaccines take ten years to develop, and we are slightly consoled. Time passes slowly when an urgent need exists, or when we are bored, and are not in control and therefore not able to speed things up. I remember as a child occasions when I was bored and everything seemed to take an age. It was excruciating. Perhaps you have similar recollections.

There’s a play called ‘Waiting for Godot’, which is much talked about both by people who have seen it, and also those who haven’t. In the play, nothing happens. The two main characters are expecting someone called ‘Godot’ to arrive, but he never comes. Despite this unpromising situation, experts have said that the play is one of the most influential of the twentieth century, and is concerned with the point and lack of point in existence. Let’s just accept that, because the point I want to take from it is that in waiting - as we are doing in Advent - the purpose of action and inaction can be questioned. Advent may be a time of inaction, in which case, the negative thoughts I mentioned a moment ago may begin to take over. We may seem to be disempowered; our beliefs may begin to look misguided. If we seek to banish the negativity by becoming busy, and spur ourselves to action with phrases like “Let’s just get on with it!”, then, like the Godot characters, we may find ourselves struggling to say what ‘it’ is, because Godot (or in our case, Jesus) has not yet arrived to tell us.

Our reading from Mark this morning is set in the wilderness. John the Baptist dwelt there, and we can take this both literally and symbolically. John had withdrawn from the established social system and was living beyond the bounds of civilized existence in a bitter, inhospitable place. John had the task of commencing the project which would reconcile God’s people to God, and put them back under his discipline or control. As it was, they were lost, but did not know it. They were blundering around in the darkness, and he sought to show them the light. He sought to set their feet on a straight and narrow path that would lead them in the right direction. It was necessary to reject the ways of the world in order to commence this journey. The journey can only commence when you acknowledge your directionless state and that you are not really in control, but in a wilderness, a place that you do not belong.

¹ John Milton 1608-1674

² From “O God, our help in ages past”, by Isaac Watts StF 132.

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Being in the wilderness is like blundering around in the darkness. Something needs to change before you can make sense of it.

I'm going to read you now a verse called 'The Gate of the Year', which is appropriate now, as Advent, every time it comes, marks the beginning of the Christian year. King George VI included in his Christmas broadcast to the Empire in 1939, soon after the beginning of World War II, during a period when there was not much fighting, but everyone knew it was about to begin; a period of agonized waiting.

I said to the man
who stood at the gate of the year,
'Give me a light that I may tread safely
into the unknown.'
And he replied ,
'Go out into the darkness
and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you
better than light
and safer than a known way !'
So I went forth
and finding the Hand of God,
trod gladly into the night .
And he led me towards the hills
and the breaking of day in the lone East.³

So, friends, the advice is clear and we should accept it: waiting, being in the dark and in a wilderness is a bleak, bewildering process unless we do it *with God*, with our hand in his. So the best thing we can do this Advent is to reach our hand, and slip it into God's. Because God, Isaiah tells us

...tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.⁴

So, you may be thinking, how do you do you get into that position? Does it require a special effort, or do you have to be terribly good and pure and in Church every day of the week? Jesus tells us that he came to save sinners, to scoop up those who have become lost or fallen by the wayside or feel themselves unworthy. Therefore, merit is not a precondition, it is need - and a willingness to turn to God. So, friends, this Advent let us make that our watchword: "God, our Father, we turn to you. Accompany us in this time of waiting. Guide us, guard us, and prepare us for the great event of Jesus's coming, so that we may move forward with him into the new year."

Amen.

³ Minnie Louise Haskins 1875-1957. The poem was written in 1908.

⁴ Isaiah 40:11

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HYMN StF 595 Lord, we have come at your own invitation

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|--|---|
| 1 Lord, we have come at your own invitation,
chosen by you, to be counted your friends ;
yours is the strength that sustains dedication,
ours a commitment we know never ends. | 3 When, at your table, each time of returning,
vows are renewed and our courage restored,
may we increasingly glory in learning
all that it means to accept you as Lord. |
| 2 Here, at your table, confirm our intention,
give it your seal of forgiveness and grace ;
teach us to serve, without pride or pretension,
Lord, in your Kingdom, whatever our place. | 4 So, in the world, where each duty assigned us
gives us the chance to create or destroy,
help us to make those decisions that bind us,
Lord, to yourself, in obedience and joy. |

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Communion: Introduction

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the space is thin between them.
Distance may divide, but Christ's promise unites
Those bounded by time, and those blessed by eternity.
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the church above and below is one.
Peter is here, and Paul, Martha and all the Marys,
Columba and Francis, Theresa and Luther King;
The saints from far back, and those who left us not long ago.
And only sight prevents us from seeing them,
One with us on the other side.
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the God who made them is present.
The Lamb, glorious on the throne, sits beside us;
The Spirit of God, the Dove, makes her resting place among us.
God inhales the breath of our prayers and spreads a table for our satisfaction.
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

We come as we are, because Jesus told us only to have a loving heart, and we remember his invitation and his promise:

"Come", he said, "all ye who travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you peace. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest."

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst. I will not cast out the one that comes to me. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be satisfied."

We come today in that peace, to inherit that rest.

Song: Lord of Life (v.1) StF 651 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zro80EwVGA>

Lord of Life, we come to you
Lord of all, our Saviour be,
Come to bless and to heal
With the light of your love.

Christ Church Woodley December 6 2020 Advent 2: Communion Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give thanks and praise

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our pleasure to give thanks to God for his grace; for his bountiful creation, for the love which has fathered us forth, for his great gift to the world, our Lord Jesus; for his guiding ministry, for his death on the Cross, and for his presence ever with us, alive in the world, we give our heartfelt thanks and praise. Amen

Breaking

In doing this, we follow Jesus's example and command.

On the night when he was arrested, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me. Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, and said, "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."

Sharing *Please take bread and wine/juice as you are able*

Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
And also with you

Song: Lord of Life vv 1 & 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4A9taizp_w

Lord of Life, we come to you
Lord of all, our Saviour be,
Come to bless and to heal
With the light of your love.

Through the days of doubt and toil
In our joy and in our pain,
Guide our steps in your Way,
Make us one in your love.

Peace

On the evening of the first Easter Day, when the disciples were together behind locked doors for fear, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you!" he said; then he showed them his hands and his side. On seeing the Lord, the disciples were overjoyed. Jesus said again, "Peace be with you".

Joyful in the presence of our risen Lord, let us share, as we are able, signs of peace.

Prayers for Intercession

*Lord, let your spirit meet us here
To mend the body, mind and soul*

Come, Lord Jesus into the darkness of our world;
A world where there is injustice, racial tension and war,
Where so many people still lack the basics of food and clean water.
Come, Lord Jesus into the uncertain future of migrants
Who risk everything to escape atrocities,
Yet know they could still end up paying with their lives.

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Come, Lord Jesu into our communities,
Where many are struggling with redundancy and debt
And foodbanks have become essential for those in need.

Come, Lord Jesus into the darkness of our cities
Where greed and discrimination make misery in peoples' lives.

Come, Lord Jesus into our lives
And into the lives of those for whom we are concerned.

Bring comfort to the bereaved
And to those who are struggling to cope with life on their own.

Come, Lord Jesus, give reassurance where there is fear,
And confidence where there is doubt.
Wherever people are hurting, come and let your light shine.

Amen

HYMN StF 181 Of the Father's love begotten https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9JUt_G_Js0

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 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. | 3 This is he whom seers in old time
chanted of with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets
promised in their faithful word ;
now he shines, the long-expected ;
let creation praise its Lord,
evermore and evermore. |
| 2 By his word was all created ;
he commanded, it was done ;
earth and sky and boundless ocean,
universe of three in one ;
all that sees the moon's soft radiance,
all that breathes beneath the sun,
evermore and evermore. | 4 O you 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 sing,
evermore and evermore ! |

Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-c.413)
translated by John Mason Neale (1811-1866) and Henry
Williams Baker (1821-1877)

Blessing

May God, who has begun a good work in us,
guard us and encourage us, & bless us on our journey,
and bring us at the last safely home.
So may the blessing of God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit
rest upon you and remain with you for ever.

Amen