

Advent Sunday

Collect: 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.

Collect for St Andrew: Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ and brought his brother with him: call us by your holy word, and give us grace to follow you without delay and to tell the good news of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 1.3–9: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶ just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel: Mark 13.24–37: ‘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. 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 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. 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:

We began recording these online services during Lent on Sunday 29th March and each week, in every service since then, we have been invited to join in saying the Lord’s Prayer.

Today on Advent Sunday it seems a good day to pause and to reflect on the words of this prayer which is at the heart of the Christian faith and which Jesus taught his first followers to pray.

The prayer starts big with the hallowing of the name of God, affirming the holiness of God and that this holiness is not to be taken for granted. It is holiness that is bigger, wider and encompasses more than all that we can understand or imagine.

But the prayer then continues by encouraging us each day to really look around us, to listen carefully and to notice how in the world in which we live, we can find signs of God's creativity, of God's wisdom, of God's love. In nature, through conversations, in encounters with other people, friends and strangers. And that we can then relate these signs to all that we do, so that we can bring forth life even when life is hard and so enable the light of God's love and hope to shine in our relationships with each other and with the living world of which we are a part.

Then comes a short pause and the second part of the prayer in which we pray for specific needs, the need of all people everywhere for food and water and not to forget all those who work to provide the necessities of life.

We are then encouraged to broaden our thinking by considering the needs of the poor and the marginalised and to reflect on the things that can separate us from others: selfishness, greed, jealousy, complacency. And to recall Jesus dying on the Cross bringing forgiveness and reconciliation and reaching out in love to all. Setting before us a pattern and path so that our lives might follow his way and show his love.

Then a final pause, before the prayer's ending with words that remind us that although we capture only but a part of the fullness of God's glory, what we do capture is sufficient for now and will lead us and guide us as we journey on through life.

In our service today the Lord's Prayer is said just before the bread and wine are offered. This will give us a short moment to say together this familiar prayer.

And so to consider again how God is reaching out in love to each of us, just as Jesus encouraged his followers to reach out in love to all both in the words of the Lord's Prayer and in the sacrament of Communion in the sharing of the bread and the wine. Jesus' giving of his very self that we might be transformed and inspired to love and to serve others. So that we and all God's children shall be free and live to praise his name.