

**Written Service Sunday December 3rd**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Susan Johnson**

*Charity number*  
**1134226**

**Advent Sunday**

**Hymn - StF 20** Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still for the presence of the Lord  
The Holy one is here  
Come bow before him now  
In reverence and fear  
In Him no sin is found  
We stand on Holy ground  
Be still for the presence of the Lord  
The Holy one is here.

Be still for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around  
He burns with Holy fire  
With splendour He is crowned  
How awesome is the sight  
Our radiant King of light  
Be still for the glory of the Lord  
Is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place  
He comes to cleanse and heal  
To minister His grace  
No work too hard for Him  
In faith receive from Him  
Be still for the power of the Lord  
Is moving in this place.

**Lord's prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**Advent Liturgy**

The Nottingham North East Circuit are using this Liturgy **Out of the ordinary** from the Methodist Church this Advent.

Our Advent ring stands waiting, for candle light to lead us on. We'll open up traditions, with challenge and with change.

**Advent God, challenge us today.**

Our box of decorations stands ready to be explored. We reassess the treasures in this bulging cardboard box. Let's sort the treasure from the trash the needed from the not.

**Advent God, challenge us today.**

Our living is refocused with preparations underway. Our ordinary and everyday will be challenged along the way. Letting go of stuff to do God's will, is here to stay.

**Advent God, challenge us today.**

In the mundane and ordinary, stars will start to fall, challenging and changing us with holy goodness breaking through.

**Advent God, challenge us today.**

Advent God, as we light this, our first Advent candle may we let go of what swamps us and serves no purpose for us, so that we can meet the challenges that lie ahead of us. May our ordinary lives be enriched by your extraordinary love for us. **Amen.**

**Reading:** Our Gospel reading is from Mark 13 : 24 – 37 where Mark gives us a selection of three sayings of Jesus concerning the end times and the second coming of Jesus.

The word Advent means "coming" in the sense that we are waiting expectantly for something to happen, something to change, to come into our lives. A bit like a pregnancy when you have the baby in the womb. The baby is there within but not yet fully 'there' or formed. God, God's Spirit, Jesus, (whatever word you want to use or find most helpful to find explain Christ in you) So we wait for this coming.

**Mark 13:24-37** *"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels and gather the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

*"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. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

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

Perhaps, we are being asked to think about how we, as followers of Jesus, are looking forward to the end times while we also look forward to a Jesus birth. But in the time in between we live with the knowledge and experience that God is with us and there is always hope for the future.

**Reading:** Romans 8: 31 – 39 God's Love in Christ Jesus

*<sup>31</sup> What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? It is Christ<sup>[a]</sup> who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,*

*"For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."*

*<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Hymn: StF 188** There's a light upon the mountains

1 There's a light upon the mountains,  
And the day is at the spring,  
When our eyes shall see the beauty  
And the glory of the King:  
Weary was our heart with waiting,  
And the night-watch seemed so long,  
But His triumph day is breaking,  
And we hail it with a song.

2 In the fading of the starlight  
We may see the coming morn;  
And the lights of men are paling  
In the splendours of the dawn;  
For the eastern skies are glowing  
As with light of hidden fire,  
And the hearts of men are stirring  
With the throbs of deep desire.

3 There's a hush of expectation  
And a quiet in the air,  
And the breath of God is moving  
In the fervent breath of prayer;  
For the suffering, dying Jesus  
Is the Christ upon the throne,  
And the travail of our spirit  
Is the travail of His own.

4 He is breaking down the barriers,  
He is casting up the way;  
He is calling for His angels  
To build up the gates of day:  
But His angels here are human,  
Not the shining hosts above;  
For the drum beats of His army  
Are the heartbeats of our love.

5 Hark! we hear a distant music,  
And it comes with fuller swell;  
'Tis the triumph-song of Jesus,  
Of our King, Immanuel!  
Go ye forth with joy to meet Him!  
And, my soul, be swift to bring  
All thy sweetest and thy dearest  
For the triumph of our King!

**Sermon**

In the 1990's I lived in Harare, the capitol of Zimbabwe for 2 years with my husband and school age children. We were there with his job and had an amazing time exploring the country and meeting wonderful people. I joined the local church and was involved with helping lead youth groups and as a steward.

The story I want to tell happened when there was great excitement when a full eclipse of the sun was due to happen . Most people including me, could not remember having seen this before. But as well as the excitement some people were worried and the day before the eclipse I was stopped by someone on my way out of the local supermarket. A man in his 30's who looked worried. He approached me and asked if I could help him as he had heard I was a Christian pastor. We began to talk and I discovered that in his church he had been told that he had to put everything right with God before the eclipse as this could be the end of the world. He was like the people in one part of the story worried that he would be left behind because he had too much to put right and no time. We had a lengthy discussion and were joined by quite a few more equally anxious people. I had not thought before that moment that the world would end or that it was Jesus second coming so I think I was able to convince him of that fact. However, we did encourage each other to keep ourselves right with God every day, as if it could be the end.

And the eclipse when it came was spectacular. Birds and animals bedded down for the night (in the middle of the day) when it got dark and the atmosphere changed around us.

So I wondered today what questions we might have about these three short images of the possibility of the second coming of Jesus, which was expected at any day by the early followers of Jesus.

Some more background to these passages which were written post resurrection to both forth tell what might happen but also to remind people of what had already happened. Mark expected to see the coming of the Son of Man for himself, but he also warns of, while there is a need to be vigilant, we are not to get too excited when you think the end may be immanent. We need to find the balance for no one knows. But Jesus is coming.

When Mark was writing there was still some confusion about who Jesus was. He had been called a prophet, a teacher, the Messiah, and here The Son of Man. The first century Christians had been expecting a King, someone to overthrow the Romans, sort out the bad behaviour in the Temple , for example, and to lead them forward as the Kings of the Old Testament had until now. But what they got was a man who knew he had to serve others, be on the side of the poor and the undervalued, to offer hope to those who were not deemed acceptable – bring down the proud – the first last, to see the world through different eyes. What they got was a suffering servant, a man who brought in a new kingdom or reign of God where love would overcome evil. This rule of God in Jesus showed that the world would be different to expectations. People would still endure troubled times, the world would not be pain free but that God would be present with the people and in all situations. And God needed us to be the hands and feet to do that work of that kingdom.

Where does this leave us today? We have an overall theme for Advent of **Out of the ordinary**. In this time of 'coming' we reflect on God with us in this season. As I indicated before, we live in the mystery of Jesus living in us, so he is already here in the lives, action and witness of his followers. This makes the ordinary extra ordinary. We don't quite fully understand how this happens but we believe that Jesus is a part of our lives, Living in us – as branches of the Vine according to John in his gospel, as living stones, according to Peter and so many different images used by Paul to explain the unexplainable: **that there is more to our ordinary lives because of the generosity of God's longing to be for us.**

That we are the body of Christ, each of us with different abilities to enable the way of Jesus to be seen in the world. However, There is still turmoil, hatred, war, violence, hunger, poverty, all sorts of evil in the world. It does feel sometimes when we watch the news that the end of the world is here. but we need to remember that the kingdom that was fully expected in Jesus is not yet here.

But the **Out of the ordinary** reminds us of the truth that in the chaos of the world's pain we are called to hold onto the words of Romans written by Paul who saw *that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus*, but there is a challenge – to live to be more like Jesus. My Dad used to sing this chorus when I was a teenager;

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All his wondrous compassion and purity.  
O thou Spirit divine all my nature refine  
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

Do you know it? It's often my prayer at bed time 😊

So today we wait for a coming, a coming of Jesus in a new way, into our lives, into our world. So we enter this Advent time with new eyes and hearts – to look for Jesus in others, act like Jesus would: in situations of pain and joy and where there is love, and grace and mercy and hope we celebrate. And acknowledge God is here and there and *that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus.*

**May this Advent be a time of looking and acting in love.**

**Hymn:** StF 405 Great is the darkness –

Great Is The Darkness That Covers The  
Earth,  
Oppression, Injustice And Pain;  
Nations Are Slipping In Hopeless Despair,  
Though Many Have Come In Your Name  
Watching While Sanity Dies,  
Touched By The Madness And Lies.

*Come, Lord Jesus, Come, Lord Jesus,  
Pour Out Your Spirit, We Pray;  
Come, Lord Jesus, Come, Lord Jesus,  
Pour Out Your Spirit On Us Today.*

May Now Your Church Rise  
With Power And Love,  
This Glorious Gospel Proclaim;  
In Every Nation Salvation Will Come  
To Those Who Believe In Your Name.  
Help Us Bring Light To This World,  
That We Might Speed Your Return.  
*Come, Lord Jesus ...*

Great Celebrations On That Final Day,  
When Out Of The Heavens You Come;  
Darkness Will Vanish, All Sorrow Will End  
And Rulers Will Bow At Your Throne;  
Our Great Commission Complete,  
Then Face To Face We Shall Meet.  
*Come, Lord Jesus ...*

### **Responsive Prayers of intercession**

After the words Gracious God, the response is **renew hearts and minds**.

So we come before God aware of situations in the world but also in our own communities and our own lives.

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

Blessed are the peacemakers– silence

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

Blessed are those who are able to show forgiveness and compassion to others – silence

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

Blessed are those who are struggling and suffering today for whatever reason – silence

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

Blessed are those who are facing an uncertain future – and are in pain - silence

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

Blessed are those who seek to do your will. – silence

Gracious God, **renew hearts and minds**

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, Amen

**Hymn: StF 167** Colours of day dawn into the mind

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.*

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.  
*So light up the fire ...*

Open your eyes, look into the sky,  
The darkness has come, the Son came to  
die.  
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,  
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.  
*So light up the fire ...*

**Blessing**

May the blessing of God , Father, Son and holy spirit be with us all. Amen