

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in unity, that our praise and worship might echo in these walls and also through our lives.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity. Amen.

Prepare to add the Christ Light ~



Advent Sunday ~ 2nd December 2018



Immanuel
St Andrew Church

Almighty God,
as your kingdom dawns,
turn us from the darkness of sin to
the light of holiness,
that we may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Jeremiah 33:14-16 OT page 749
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 NT page 201
Luke 21:25-36 NT page 82
(NIV used in sermon preparation).

There are many ways of approaching Advent to get the best out of it and discover more of God's amazing Grace.

The trick, if there is one, is to work out what works for you and your family and ring the changes year by year.

The way that the church sets out the four weeks of Advent make it probably the easiest of the church seasons to navigate through ~ each week being clearly designated an aspect of God's great work of the incarnation.

There are visual aids galore to select from, each with its own value and telling part of the story and revealing just how much God desires His children to know Him personally, to praise Him and to proclaim Him to others. God wants us to enjoy His love so much that we simply can't hide it from others because it influences all that we are and do. So that we proclaim God's love often without even opening our mouths ~ it is like an aura that surrounds and sustains us that is seen by anyone who the Holy Spirit places in our path! Remember, we heard a few weeks ago about how God desires to write His Laws in our heart.

Over the next four weeks we hear about faithful people who radiated God's love to others, who quietly trusted the God knew

what He was doing and who sometimes put themselves in great danger to share what they knew of God by being obedient to what He asked of them.

We are encouraged to wait on God ~ to be expectant for His working in our lives and world ~ to expect to see God at work in everything ~ to see the light in the darkness. Our Collect asks that our darkness is turned into light ~ that sin is turned into holiness. We light a candle to remind us of the patriarchs ~ those who God placed amongst us to lead and father us ~ they come from the house of Jacob and include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Some churches today call their Senior leader or head of their church patriarch ~ so the closest in the church of England would be our bishops. As in days gone by, the patriarchs are not perfect, they each have their doubts but they head their family in understanding their faith.

Our prayer for this first light ~ declares something of all that the patriarchs tried to reveal to us ~ and asks that Jesus will be King in our lives.

God's word describes how God is making the preparations for His children to come back to Him ~ The patriarchs are descendants of Jesse and will save God's people and the people that are saved, you and me, will continually thank God and praise Him for the joy of knowing Him; they will share with each other and support each other as they discover more of God and they will be able to do this because the Holy Spirit will clear the way for them so that our love overflows for everyone in whatever way God gifts us to express it.

You know ~ the paradox is that the more we overflow with God's love the more we are strengthened and resourced to give. The world may try to exhaust us but God will refresh us and we will be blameless in His sight.

We are told that there will be signs to guide us and reassure us; that giving will not come naturally or easily at times but that we must remain expectant that God is doing a good thing ~ learn to recognise what He is doing and that He will give us a heart to want to be part of it!

How far have we got to go to get close to realising those Promises ~ still a long way ~ so we had better get started again this Advent! ~ Let God work in us and share it with each other.

We have made a start, we are learning to focus on the cross and not ourselves, and now we need to want to know more and be more involved. We have experienced all that God has warned us of ! We have been weighed down, personally and as a church, and we are learning that we have to be vigilant and guard against being trapped by what weighs us down, not adding to it through our own anxieties but by dispelling those anxieties so that the expectancy can shine through.

Today I invite each of us to make the commitment to do that ~ to expect the Holy Spirit to work through us this Advent and to reveal God's plan to us week by week.

Next week our focus is on God purifying our hearts to enable that to happen and how we will recognise God's light in the world.

Week three will focus on our continual preparation to pilgrimage ~ to walk "The Way of Christ" and clear His pathand even enjoy doing it!

Week four will focus on us hearing directly from God what He requires of us to enable us to trust Him and know Him more and it teaches us about waiting for God and not going it alone or leaving Him behind!

And then we celebrate ~ showing each other how much we value and appreciate each other because God has revealed how much He values us! We pray that we will always hold on to the truth and Hope of His love and the light it brings to our lives.

The words of our worship and the foundation of our prayers through Advent challenge us to be expectant during the waiting in our journey and they reinforce that we are all part of the preparations to greet Jesus again ~ to welcome Him in and to learn to be like Him. To acknowledge that each of us have experienced coming to a standstill in our faith and to start to walk again!

Let us pray.