

27 November 2022

Light one candle for hope,
One bright candle for hope.
He brings hope to everyone.
He comes. He comes

The first candle of Advent is the candle of Hope. We light this candle to remind us that our hope is in Jesus and to watch for His return.

Light the first candle

Loving God, we thank You for the Hope you give us.

As we worship you this morning draw out of us the darkness of the world, and fill us with the light of hope.

We ask in the name of the One born in Bethlehem. Amen

Hymn

Greeting

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
And also with you.

Sentence

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. Isaiah 2.3a

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Faithful God, whose promises stand unshaken through all generations: renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our Judge and Saviour, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Isaiah 2.1-5

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ² in the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³ Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Psalm 122

¹ I was glad when they said to me: 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'

² And now our feet are standing: within your gates, O Jerusalem;

³ Jerusalem which is built as a city: where the pilgrims gather in unity.

⁴ There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord: as he commanded Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

⁵ There are set thrones of judgement: the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may those who love you prosper.

⁷ Peace be within your walls: and prosperity in your palaces.

⁸ For the sake of my kindred and companions: I will pray that peace be with you.

⁹ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God: I will seek for your good.

Romans 13.9-14

⁹ The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. ¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh

Matthew 24.36-44

³⁶ 'But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark ; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² 'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him'

Sermon

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

the prayers

Let us pray for the world and for the Church. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and who ever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6.35

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.

Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

Invitation to Confession

The Lord comes, bringing to light things now hidden in darkness, and disclosing the purposes of the heart. Let us open our hearts and prepare for his coming, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. **We meet in his name and share his peace.**

Hymn

OFFERTORY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Thanksgiving 3

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 our thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary
and lived as one of us.

By his death on the cross
and rising to new life,
he offered the one true sacrifice for sin
and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

We thank you that when he shall come again
in power and great triumph to judge the world,
we may with joy behold his appearing,
and in confidence stand before him
who redeems us from sin and death
and makes us heirs of everlasting life.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name,
for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise.

All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory.

We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight. Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace. In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread:

so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

After Communion

God for whom we wait, we thank you that you have fed us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

As we joyfully await your Son, renew us in hope, keep us ever watchful that we may be ready to stand before him on the day of his coming.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

notices

Hymn

Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness, renew you in hope, shine upon you, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen**



The first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Hope and yet we have some fairly interesting readings.

So many things in life are temporary, even our very lives are not guaranteed, there have been times when we thought we were secure in a job but suddenly everything changed and we are looking for something new, we are planning our future with our loved ones, looking forward to many more years together and suddenly they are gone, how do we live on without them? So many things we expect to continue or happen but there is no guarantee, really, we can only hope.

In real life our only sure hope is in Jesus. We know that he loves us and that he will never leave us and that somehow, he will continue to walk with us every day. A new job will happen, God will provide, or we take an early retirement and find new things to do. Life without our loved one looks so empty but there are other loved ones, other purposes and gradually a new path will open. We live in the hope of Jesus.



Some things cannot be known before hand, Jesus said that even he did not know when the destruction of Jerusalem or his own return would occur, but he trusted his Father to have everything under control and encourage his followers to be ready.

Our gospel passage has been read by various people in different ways; many have seen this as a warning to be ready for when Jesus returns, and many have read it as a warning to be ready for our own death. Both interpretations are possible and both warnings are important for us to take heed of. Whether Jesus returns or we go to be with him in Paradise we are going to face our maker and we will need to give an account of our lives. Since nobody knows when that will be. it is vital that all Christians should be ready all the time. That is one of the reasons why keeping short accounts with God, through regular worship, prayer, reading the bible, self-examination and Christian obedience matters as much as it does.



You can read this passage in either of these two ways, or both. Often the voice of God can be heard in scripture in ways the original writers did not imagine, though we need to always have a clear sense of what the original did mean to avoid making scripture prove all kinds of things which it certainly did not mean. Originally, Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem with only slight thought about his return.

He knew that something would happen which would devastate lives, families, and communities, it would be a sudden sequence of events that will end with the destruction of the temple and much of Jerusalem.



We know that in 70AD an uprising against the Romans went horribly wrong and the Romans retaliated with massive destruction. Like in the days of Noah life would be going on as normal right up to the last minute and anyone who was not prepared could be swept up in the onslaught. Families would be divided; some would be killed, and others escape. There were no spectacular or mysterious signs of the approaching disaster.

He was not, in fact, telling us about the rapture but stating what always happened in conflict and war; some are taken and some left, some are killed, and some flee. Jesus was warning his disciples that they needed to stay awake, keep aware of current events and be ready to act.



So, this warning was primarily directed to the situation of dire emergency in the first century, but they ring through all the centuries and into our own day. We live in turbulent and dangerous times, who knew in 2019 that we were about to be struck by a pandemic, who knew in 2020 that Russia would decide to expand their borders? Who foresaw the bushfires or the current floods?

We do not know what tomorrow will bring but we need to be ready to do whatever our Lord asks so that we are in the right place at the right time. What we disciples do know is that the end could come at any time: this knowledge should spur us to active engagement in our assigned mission. It is up to each church and each individual Christian to answer the question: are you ready?



Truthfully, I'm not 100% sure how Jesus will return and how that will play out for the Christians who are on earth at that time, but I do know that one day he will return triumphant. In the meantime, we believers' job is to endure faithfully our tribulations, which is part of the church's mission and not try to escape from them. In the present the two men in the field or the two women working together appear alike, but the judgement will reveal which one is saved and which is lost.

The time of Jesus' return cannot be calculated. Disciples are to be busy with the assigned mission: bringing the gospel to a lost world, not with apocalyptic speculation. Jesus loves all the people even the ones we find a little difficult to love and he wants us to be communicating that love to everyone we meet, giving them the hope of glory in their lives.



Our passage from Isaiah was a message of hope to the people of Israel, they were living in a time of uncertainty, kings came and went, there were uprisings and invasions and no one knew what the future held but Isaiah knew that one day God would rule, his people would live in peace, and many would join them in worshipping God and living his way and that God would judge those who choose not to join. There will be no war and the descendants of Jacob would walk in the light of the Lord.

That prophecy has yet to come completely true, but the Jews held on to it with great hope and we can do the same. This is our hope: the Lord reigns and one day all of humanity will see his glory and we will be with Him. Can you imagine that time, not only will we be with all our loved ones again but people we don't even recognise will come up to us thanking us for things we did that we have totally forgotten but which helped them on their journey of hope.



That is the way we need to live every day, helping others, planting seeds of hope, watering little pots of hope, encouraging others in their hope. As Paul said when he was writing to the Roman: whatever other command there may be, it is summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law. There are people who are so dedicated to following God's law that they forget that Jesus said the greatest commandments are to love God totally and love your neighbour, they quote minor laws from the Old Testament or injunctions that Paul gave for own his time in his letters and fail to see where that fails in our society to show God's love.

We don't know the time, the year, the month the day or the hour of Christ's return, but we do know however is what we are supposed to be doing in the meantime. We are to be always ready, that means doing the acts of mercy, love, forgiveness and peace that characterise kingdom people.

In Matthew's understanding of Christian faith, our expectation of the second coming doesn't cause us to quit the job of being the church in the world, it calls us to take it up with even more urgency.



May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him and bring his hope and love to everyone.