

Advent Sunday Reflection - Anthea Kenna

God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming.



Reveal among us the light of your presence that we may behold your power and glory

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;
give new courage to your people,
who trust in your love.

By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom
on earth as in heaven,
where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading - 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 his 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.

Reflection

The readings for this Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent have to do with being prepared, with being vigilant, on guard, waiting for the Lord's return. Advent is a penitential season, one which is supposed to be something like Lent, i.e. we pray, we fast, we give to a charity, etc. We do this in order to make ourselves ready to see the Christ child, as did the Shepherds on that special night and like the three Wise men when they brought their gifts. It is also a time of renewal, for as you may have read from Alastair's reflection last week, today marks the New Year in the Church and it is a time for new beginnings. Often we wait for the secular New Year to make all kinds of resolutions, but we can do so now, for today is Advent Sunday, a day in which the Lord calls us again to start fresh.

The first mention of Advent is found in ancient writings dating back to the sixth century, with some anecdotal mentions as early as AD 380 at the Spanish Council of Saragossa! So not only is it an old Christian practice, but it's also a very personal one, as churches have adapted the practice to suit their local parishes. So while there's no authoritative guide to Advent, we can find some commonalities in the ways churches have practiced the observance of Advent throughout history. There is no right or wrong way to observe Advent as long as you're coming to God with a sincere and open heart.

Generally, the themes that correspond to each week are identified as Hope, Peace, Love and Joy and are also represented by candles in the Advent Candle Wreath. Such important themes for this year, in particular.

Candles themselves are synonymous with many festivals and, at this time of the year, twinkling lights and candles everywhere remind us that Jesus is the light of the world that came to dispel the darkness. Lighting candles has long been a sacred ritual in all traditions, creating precious moments in our own and other people's lives.

That theme of light is what originally gave birth to the Advent wreath hundreds of years ago in Lutheran Germany, and it's become a beloved tradition in many churches and homes. The Advent Wreath is typically an evergreen wreath containing five candles, each lit on successive Sundays during the Advent readings, with the final central white candle on Christmas Day.



Often we rush through Advent in the hustle and bustle to be ready for Christmas, losing the opportunity to appreciate the themes of being prepared, being vigilant, being on guard and waiting for the Lord's return. This year, due to Covid restrictions, we have been given some time. We know Christmas will be different but, if we give it the preparation and time it requires, we may be surprised at what it brings us.

Light is used to symbolize God, faith, and holiness throughout Scripture. As Christians, we are called to not only walk in the light but to be the light for others. So let us light our own candle whenever we feel the need. Let us link hearts with friends and loved ones, punctuate a prayer, ask for or give support, mark an anniversary... a death... a birth... a birthday... healing...friendship...a remembrance ... or just to affirm this moment!

Worship Music

Like a Candle Flame

<https://youtu.be/teZaQUKjx24>

Lo He Comes with Clouds Descending

<https://youtu.be/jjn3fBTvBjY>

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

<https://youtu.be/aoye-iqMylw>

Christ be our Light

<https://youtu.be/caA4sIXkD44>

Intersessions

Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence
before our Maker and Redeemer.

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations
his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the brokenhearted,
restore the sick
and raise up all who have fallen,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That, with all the saints in light,
we may shine forth as lights for the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God....

We commend ourselves, those for whom we pray and the whole of creation to your unending love and protection

Almighty God,
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ
first came to seek and to save the lost;
so may he come again to find in us
the completion of his redeeming work;
for he is now alive
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:

**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 them that 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.**

Blessing

The light of God surround us.
The love of God enfold us.
The power of God protect us.

And the blessing of God Almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen.**

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



If you are unable to light a physical candle or wish to have a focus for your time of reflection, there are many online virtual candles that may be lit. Below are just a few links that you may find useful.

'In Him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" John 1.4-5)

gratefulness.org – light a candle

www.churchofengland.org > life-events

thecenterforhealingarts.com > light-a-candle