

2020-11-29 ... 10am Sermon and Video Reflection ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Isaiah 64:1–9; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9
'Advent and Waiting'

Advent What comes into your mind when you hear that word : **Advent**

Maybe it's Advent Calendars ...

Or perhaps ... Advent Candles

For those who have sung in church choirs – it might be Advent Carol Services ...

This year – for all of us – another association is apt:

Advent and Waiting

It is true every year:

Every year there are three types of waiting:

- Waiting the four weeks until we celebrate the birth of Jesus
- Waiting for the coming of Jesus again at the end of time and
- Waiting for Jesus to come and meet us in whatever need we are experiencing

It's that last one that is likely to be more at the forefront of our minds in 2020 than in previous years, as the Coronavirus pandemic continues:

Waiting for Jesus to come and meet us in whatever need we are experiencing:

- Waiting to see what will happen about lockdowns
- Waiting to see if we – or a family member or friend – have tested positive
- Waiting to see if someone is going to recover
- Waiting to see what will happen to our business

And so many more kinds of waiting Many of us are fed up of waiting and worried about the time passing bywhat has God to say to us, what comfort ... or hope ... or joy has God to offer us in this kind of waiting?

Today's OT passage: Isaiah 64 v1-9 is important here

Let me read you this from the Journey with Jesus website by Dan Clendenin:

Isaiah in the OT reading for Advent Sunday is also fed up with: he cries to God: **"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!"** Three times Isaiah uses this spatial metaphor of a God high and remote who "comes down" from the heavens to scatter the enemies and make the nations quake.

Many of us have experienced this intense longing for an unequivocal demonstration of God's mighty power. Who has not felt like God was "up there" while we languish "down here," and longed for him to close that gap? Who has not felt like Isaiah that despite these prayers that are raw with emotion, yet God still felt silent, even hidden? Who has not begged God for a new job, healing for cancer, reconciliation with a family member, financial provision, guidance in the midst of confusion, peace when attacked by anxiety, solace when your heart is broken, and on the list goes ..."Lord, split the heavens and come down! **Now!**"

Well, New Testament scholars tell us that this is just the sort of prayer and expectation that Israel had for a Messiah—a mighty Lord who would vanquish the hated Romans. But what they got was a vulnerable baby in a manger.

This, I think, has a depth of meaning and of hope in our current Covid-19 situation.

Why?

This vulnerable baby and his human family remind us that the answer to our prayers may often come in a surprising and 'downbeat' form ... God working through ordinary people and events ... in our current plight through those who – in their paid or voluntary work bring compassionate care and skill; those whose research we may never have been aware of before ... now almost centre stage for testing, treatments and vaccines

This vulnerable baby demonstrates that God does indeed care deeply about the plight of the world ... and so acts comes to share in that plight ... God shows us how to live within that world and gives us his strength and guidance to do so ... we recall, especially in Advent and at Christmas, that Jesus is the light – a light that no darkness can ever overcome. In a phrase from our New Testament reading: 1 Corinthians 1 v3-9: **Our Lord Jesus Christ will also strengthen you to the end.**

As we wait in various ways this Advent, we can do so with hope and with an underlying strength that comes from God's gift of comfort.

As we wait in various ways this Advent we are also called to stay alert – alert to when we can offer that hope and comfort to others – because we have experienced God's gifts ourselves – and alert to the signs of God's action.

This vulnerable baby, our Lord Jesus Christ, was not what many thought they were waiting for ... but this vulnerable baby is Emmanuel – God with us ... God amongst us ... God bringing comfort and hope in the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Wait well this Advent!! May God's blessing be yours. Amen.