

2022-12-11 ... Evensong Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt
Isaiah 5: 8 – end; Acts 13:13-41

‘Advent: Sin and Forgiveness’

Introduction ...

I wonder what was going through your mind when the Old Testament lesson was being read:

God’s judgement on social injustice and those who lie about what is good and what is evil?

And the ending:

“And if one looks to the land – only darkness and distress; and the light goes dark with the clouds”

This could be termed an ‘old fashioned Advent reading’ – from the time when Advent was viewed and celebrated as a serious time ... one in which the joy of Christmas was anticipated but not yet celebrated. Times have changed

Advent experience

Does it matter?

Does it matter if Christmas Carols are sung – even before Advent Sunday (as this year), never mind between Advent Sunday and Christmas?

Does it matter if Christmas Decorations are up in church before Christmas Eve?

Well, some people will feel that it does because of tradition ... but I think there’s a more serious issue.

It links with something a retired Bishop – Alan Chesters – once said to me about the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. He said: *‘I really do object when the first reading is not Genesis 3.’* You’ll probably recall this reading is about sin and broken relationships – including between humanity and God. Bishop Alan went on to say something like: *‘If we don’t acknowledge the presence and seriousness of sin – we don’t really understand the need for a Saviour’.*

And so – in Advent – it’s helpful ... beneficial ... to be reminded of sin – as we were in our Old Testament reading – but also to allow that to lead us to immense gratitude for the gift of Jesus ... as our New Testament reading concluded –

“Let it be known to you, therefore ... that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus, everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”

If we minimise the presence and destructiveness of sin, we also minimise the greatness of the salvation Jesus offers to us – which includes forgiveness and freedom from the power of sin.

To conclude

Here’s an Advent meditation by Ken Tayler © (from The Bumper Book of Resources Advent, Christmas & Epiphany [2015] Kevin Mayhew)

Advent

Advent says that Christmas is coming – but it is far more than a countdown.

and more than a warning
that time is short

for all we have to do:

Advent is for preparing -
not only for Christmas
but for preparing ourselves;

Advent is for waiting
not only for Christmas to come
but for waiting 'on the Lord'
in stillness and in silence;

Advent is for watching
and not only for the poste
but for Christ when he comes

Advent believes that Christ is coming
and talks of hope at the end of time,
at the end of life.

And so, for generations,
in Advent, people looked to the future,
for the Second Coming
and the end of time.

And I believe that the End is Christ:

that when I come to the end of my time
Christ will be there;

that when human history comes to an end
Christ will be there.

Beyond that,
beyond what we can see,
or dare not hazard a guess
and I will not limit hope.

But Advent believes that Christ is coming,
not only at the end of time,
but now.

Advent is watching
to see what he is doing in the world
and watching for Christ coming to you,

you recognising and receiving him,
him bringing you peace and joy

and setting you free. © Ken Tayler (from The Bumper Book of Resources Advent, Christmas & Epiphany [2015] Kevin Mayhew)