

DORSET SOUTH & WEST CIRCUIT WRITTEN SERVICE
ADVENT SUNDAY NOVEMBER 28TH 2021 by Chris Warren

A very warm welcome to this service. I invite you to sing the hymns out loud and enjoy!

Opening: Come, long expected Jesus, born to set us free!

S the F: 9

Hail! Holy, holy, holy Lord whom one in three we know; by all the heavenly host adorned by all the church below.

One undivided Trinity with triumph we proclaim; thy universe is full of thee and speaks thy glorious name.

Thee, holy Father we confess, thee, holy Son adore, thee, Spir't of truth and holiness, we worship evermore.

Hail! Holy, holy, holy Lord, our heavenly song shall be, supreme, essential One, adored in co-eternal Three.

Prayers:

Awesome God, may we know your presence here with us now. You draw near in your majesty and love. We praise you in the magnificence of your nature and the beauty of the Trinity. Your wonderful and varied creation is all around and we marvel at it. Most of all we are conscious of the depth of your love for us, how you are mindful of us – the work of your hands. However, we realise that we have not always listened to your Word. We have thought first of ourselves and not you and others. Lord please forgive our failings and our thoughtlessness. May we hear Jesus' words, 'Your sins are forgiven'. Make us anew as those who look outwards to build a world that looks like your Kingdom. AMEN

Introduction for Advent

Today we move from looking back as it were, to Easter and Pentecost, to look towards Christmas. Clearly the commercial world is already geared up especially with concerns about availability. The next weeks are important in the same way as Lent looks to Easter, so we can be more prepared. First we will look at a prophecy in the Old Testament which is one of a number seen as pointing forward to Jesus. Then we will look at the challenging theme of the second coming of Jesus.

O T Reading: Isaiah 9 vs. 6/7

S the F 169

Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free, from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth though art, dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king, born to reign in us for ever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

Talk 1

Some of the passages in the Old Testament which are believed to point forward to Jesus, date from as early as eight centuries before that first Christmas. Isaiah is a favourite book to find helpful prophecies. The prophets had no sense that they were looking so far ahead and would have seen the words from God relating to their own time. Our reading from chapter 9 of Isaiah presumably relates to the birth of a son to the king with his authority growing continually. However, the second part of verse 7 says that justice and righteous continues for ever! This is much more relevant to Jesus Christ. Much history would have to roll by: for instance the Exile/return and the Maccabees Revolt of the mid second century B. C., before Jesus would start to fulfil this prophesy and the time was right. There was then the Roman peace allowing the message and news of Jesus to spread, one international language (Greek) to allow the message not only to be heard but understood and the expectation of the Jews particularly with their subjection by the Romans leading to an intensification of the expectation of the Messiah. However, this created a challenge for Jesus as most Jews expected a military leader to drive out the Romans.

In quiet, please look again at the passage and reflect on how Jesus fulfils this prophesy.

S the F 167

Colours of day dawn into the mind, the sun has come up, the night is behind. Go down to the city, into the street, and let's give the message to the people we meet.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn, open the door, let Jesus return. Take seeds of the Spirit, let the fruit grow, tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.

Go through the park, on into the town; the sun shall shine on; it never goes down, the light of the world is rising again; tell the people of darkness are needing a friend.

So light up the fire...

Open your eyes, look into the sky, the darkness has come, the sun came to die, the evening draws on, the sun disappears, but Jesus is living, the Spirit is near.

So light up the fire....

N T: Luke 21 vs. 25-36

Talk 2

The idea that Jesus will return can be seen as an embarrassment to us after so long. The early disciples expected Jesus to come back quickly and this is seen as the reason that Jesus' words predicting the fall of Jerusalem and his own return seem to get crossed. Some Jewish believers have now given up the hope of the Messiah coming and in the same way it feels like some Christians have quietly abandoned the belief in Jesus' return. Peter reminds us that: 'a thousand years are as a day in the Lord's sight'. (2 Peter 3 v. 8) The writer is here speaking of the 'delay' in Jesus return and challenges those to whom he is writing that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night i.e. unexpectedly.

We should not lose heart because we can be sure of Jesus' promises. In just the same way as Jesus' accurately prophesied the Fall of Jerusalem in A D 70 so we can be sure he will come again as promised.

As a teenager I used to enjoy watching Bolton Wanderers, my home football side, which was then one of the top sides in the country. I enjoyed their open, wide, forward passing, and of course the wins! More recently I find the constant passing back of teams frustrating and particularly the playing for the final whistle. If the team like the potential result they seem to mess about, and then get caught out with their opponents scoring! Let us not get caught out! Let us, as Peter says, be ready living our lives 'in holiness and goodness'.

Let us play up to the final whistle, even though we are not sure when it will come.

Please read 2 Peter 3 vs. 8-10. Reflect on the writer's words. Does this help us to be ready and yet able to wait?

Prayer and Lord's Prayer:

Almighty God as we begin to look forward to Christmas, may the world recognise the significance of your coming as Jesus. This amazing act challenges us to see your love for each person. We pray for a world which is more ready to take than to give, more ready to be selfish than to care. Come, Lord Jesus, with healing, come with renewal, come with hope.

We remember those for whom Christmas will be the same as any other time; for those who will not be able to share in anything different or extra. We think of those who will spend the Day in refugee camps not knowing what tomorrow will bring. Jesus, you who was born in a stable and put in an animal feed holder and were soon to become a refugee, so associating with those who suffer, bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the joyless, filling to the empty.

Renew us Lord, that we may offer renewal to others, give us hope that we may share that hope and give us grace that we may offer grace.

Lord's Prayer.

Prayer for our giving of money, talent and time.

S the F 188

There's a light up on the mountain and the day is at the spring, when our eyes shall see the beauty and the coming of the King; weary was our heart with waiting and the night watch seemed so long, but the triumph day is breaking and we hail it with a song.

There's a hush of expectation and a quiet in the air; and the breath of God is moving in the quiet breath of prayer; for the suffering dying Jesus is the Christ up on the throne, and the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.

He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way; he is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day; but his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above; for the drumbeats of his army are the heartbeats of our love.

Hark! We hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell; 'tis the triumph song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel; Zion go now forth to meet him, and my soul be swift to bring all your finest and your noblest for the triumph of our King.

Close: Lord give us the courage of your coming and the wonder of your love, this day and for evermore. AMEN