

## Service at home - Advent Sunday - 28 November 2021 (Prepared by Graham Skedgell)



Today marks the beginning of the season of Advent, which is a four-week period leading up to Christmas. In many Churches around the world, candles will be lit today, and on the next three Sundays. These are said to symbolise hope, love, joy, and peace. Although the origins of Advent are not entirely clear, it is believed to have begun in the late fourth century, and seems to have been

developed by the Church primarily to provide time for the final preparation of candidates for baptism. The normal three-year period therefore culminated in forty days of preparation during Lent. Baptism would then follow at Easter.

So as we begin the season of Advent this year, let's make our opening hymn a prayer.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice!*  
*Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who orderest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and  
cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! .....*

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, who sent messengers to announce the birth of your Son that people might believe in Him, open now our ears to hear your call, our hearts to repent of our sins, and our lives to walk in your ways. May we profess Christ until by his grace we stand before your glory. Grant this, we pray, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

### Lord's prayer

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 21: 25-36. You may find it helpful to read this from *The Message*

“It will seem like all hell has broken loose: sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the world in a panic, the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom, the powers-that-be quaking.

And then, then! They’ll see the Son of Man welcomed in grand style, a glorious welcome! When all this starts to happen, up on your feet. Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!”

He told them a story. “Look at a fig tree. Any tree for that matter. When the leaves begin to show, one look tells you that summer is right around the corner. The same here, when you see these things happen, you know God’s kingdom is about here.

### **Prayers of intercession**

O come, O come Emmanuel,  
And sit with us as we wait;  
Filled with anticipation and longing.  
Waiting for the pandemic to end,  
For that weight to be lifted,  
And the reminder that you are in our midst.

O come, O come Light of the World,  
And shine into the darkness;  
Bring hope to the hopeless,  
And make clear a path for justice.  
Give us guidance as we seek your kingdom,  
Shine brightly through us as we do your will.

O come, O come Christ Jesus,  
And walk with us every day.  
We bring you our fears and desires,  
As an offering of all that we are.  
We wait with yearning,  
To see the world reconciled to you.  
For weeping to cease,  
The hungry to be fed,  
Wounds to be healed,  
Widows and orphans cared for,  
And peace and mercy delivered.

O come, O come Emmanuel, hear our prayer.

**AMEN**

Don’t brush this off: I’m not just saying this for some future generation, but for this one, too, these things will happen. Sky and earth will wear out; my words won’t wear out.

But be on your guard. Don’t let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it’s going to come on everyone, everywhere, at once.

So, whatever you do, don’t fall asleep at the wheel. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that’s coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man.”

**Reflection:**

The word *advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning *arrival* or *coming*, which in turn comes from the Greek word *parousia*. In effect, it invites us to face in two directions at once. Backward, to the time when Jesus was born. And forward, to the time when He will come again.

The Advent season is therefore a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming, as well as to a celebration of His birth at Christmas. From the earliest days of the Church, people have been fascinated by Jesus' promise to come back. But the scripture readings during Advent, including our reading today, tell us not to waste time with predictions. Advent is not intended to be a time for speculation about when He will return. Instead, our readings call us to be alert and ready, not weighted down and distracted by the cares of this world (Lk 21:34-36). As *The Message* puts it, "*Be on your guard. Don't let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping.*" And, "*Don't fall asleep at the wheel.*" Life is full to the brim with things that can distract us if we allow them to. But as followers of Jesus, let's remain focussed on those things that matter most, and do what we can to encourage others to do the same. And during this season of Advent, let us take a step back from all the stuff of life, and take time to be quiet, to enjoy the Lord's peace and presence, and in so doing, prepare our hearts not only for Christmas, but also for the time when Jesus will come again.

Let's sing, or pray, or simply read the words of the following hymn.

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,	Born Thy people to deliver,
Born to set Thy people free;	Born a child and yet a King,
From our fears and sins release us,	Born to reign in us forever,
Let us find our rest in Thee.	Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,	By Thine own eternal Spirit
Hope of all the earth Thou art;	Rule in all our hearts alone;
Dear Desire of every nation,	By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Joy of every longing heart.	Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

And a prayer to end.

Lord, open our eyes to the coming of your light  
Emmanuel, God with us, lifting the burden of darkness from our lives

Lord, open our hearts to the warmth of your coming  
Emmanuel, God with us, melt the hardness that keeps us from loving you and each other

Lord, open our lives to Emmanuel, God with us.  
Renew in us your call to new life.

**AMEN**