

to God coming among us in Jesus, but to Christ's final return. Advent reminds us of the need to be ready when he comes.

Jesus spoke about the coming of the Son of Man. He told stories about those who were ready and those who were not. His generation expected that he would return in their lifetimes, and when this did not happen his followers exhorted them to remain faithful and to continue to trust. We do not know whether Jesus will return in our own lifetime but we do believe that we will face him on the day of our death. Whichever comes first, no-one knows when that day will be. We may be prepared, but it may come "like a thief in the night", catching us unawares.

Advent renews the call to preparedness. It renews the call to us to be the people of hope. Will we stand with the people of today this Advent, spreading hope to people without hope?

Sunday: Micah 5.2-5a *The promised Ruler*

Monday: Matthew 24.29-31 *The coming of the Son of Man*

Tuesday: Mark 13.32-37 *Keep awake, for you do not know when the master will come*

Wednesday: Matthew 25.1-13 *The ten bridesmaids wait for the bridegroom*

Thursday: Luke 12.13-21 *This very night your life is being demanded of you*

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 *Encourage one another with these words*

Saturday: Titus 2.11-14 *Waiting for the blessed hope of our God and Saviour*

Pray · Give thanks for the hope we have in Christ

- That we might rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer (Romans 12.12)

Prayer for Advent



Advent Prayer Leaflet 2015

Coolangatta Q 4225

Dear Friends,

When making preparations for Christmas plays we know who the main characters are. We need people to be Mary and Joseph, we need shepherds and angels, an innkeeper, and perhaps some wise men. But who are the people of Advent? You will immediately say John the Baptist, the herald of Advent. But there are many others - people who were waiting in patient hope, people who were overcome with amazement, people who were dubious and people who believed, people who repented and people who did not, people who were ready and people who were unprepared. These are not only the people of Advent; they are the people of every season. Advent throws the spotlight on what sort of people we are and where we stand in relation to God.

In this Advent prayer leaflet I am going to look at the people of Advent. In week one John the Baptist is centre stage, with the people at the river - people on the verge of a new beginning. Next we will encounter Simeon and Anna and the people in the Temple - people of prayer and expectation. The people in the street will be our focus in week 3, ordinary people going about their business who are suddenly caught up in excitement and wonder. They are the people of joy. In the last week we will reflect on the people of today. We are the people of hope, seeking to proclaim a message of hope in a world grown weary of waiting. Advent means more than

preparation for Christmas and the coming of Christ as a child in a manger. It also looks forward to the time when the Kingdom of God will be realized in all its fullness, when Christ shall rule with justice and righteousness, when peace shall reign and the earth shall be filled with the glory of God.

For some, this promise from God has become nothing more than a pipe dream whose fulfillment is merely an impossible ideal. But not for the people of expectation, prayer, joy and hope. May we always seek to live in the Kingdom even while we await its final consummation. May we always be ready to meet our Lord at the river, in church, in the street, and in the present moment.

God bless. *Sue*

Daily Prayer for Advent

God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.

Sunday: Zephaniah 3.14-20 *The Lord is in your midst*

Monday: Luke 2.8-12, 15-20 *The shepherds encounter the Christ child*

Tuesday: Luke 1.39-45 *Mary's visit to Elizabeth*

Wednesday: John 4.5-14, 25-26, 28-30, 39-42 *The Samaritan woman encounters Jesus at the well*

Thursday: Luke 19.1-10 *Zacchaeus is happy to welcome Jesus*

Friday: Luke 19.28-38 *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem*

Saturday: Acts 3.1-10 *A crippled beggar leaps for joy*

Pray · Give thanks and praise that the Lord is in our midst
· That we might recognise the presence of Jesus as he comes to us in our everyday lives and activities

Prayer for Advent

Jesus and the people of our time. People of hope

Coming, ready or not!

On the final Sunday of Advent the prophet Micah brings a message of hope. He promises a Ruler who will bring justice and peace to the ends of the earth, who will bring security and care for his people like a shepherd cares for the sheep. To the people of today, and perhaps people of every age, world peace seems a long way long off, and there is scepticism that anyone could ever achieve it. And yet people of faith have not given up. We reaffirm our hope every week in the Communion Service:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again

We believe that Jesus is the promised Ruler and that his Kingdom will come. During Advent we look forward not only



The shepherds and the people in the street. People of joy

On the third Sunday of Advent the readings begin with Zephaniah's Song of Joy in which he declares "The Lord is in your midst." When the angels announced the news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, they called it "good news of great joy". The shepherds were overcome with amazement, glorifying and praising God. They were ordinary people, like the people in the street, going about their business, until they were touched by the presence of the Christ child. These are Advent people, for they recognise that the Lord is in their midst.



Elizabeth is one of these Advent people. In Luke's story of Mary's visit, Elizabeth's unborn child leaps for joy in the presence of the Lord, and Elizabeth recognises that it is the mother of her Lord who comes. Others were not so quick to realise who Jesus was. The Samaritan woman encountered him as she drew water at the town well, and it was only after an extended debate that she began to understand. Her amazement/joy was infectious, so that many from her village came to see and believe. Zacchaeus was literally in the street when Jesus came past. He immediately responded to Jesus' invitation and was happy to welcome him into his home. The crowds in the Jerusalem streets also welcomed Jesus as he entered the city in triumph, "praising God joyfully with a loud voice." But how quickly their joy turned into murderous rage when it became clear that he was not the kind of king they wanted. The crippled beggar leapt for joy and praised God after he encountered the risen Christ in the presence of his disciples. Will we be one of the people in the street this Advent, joyfully praising God for all we have seen and heard?

John the Baptist and the people at the river. Seeking a new beginning

John the Baptist is the central figure of Advent, standing on the river bank and proclaiming the coming Kingdom. The people at the water's edge do not know that they are standing on the verge of a new beginning. Israel stood at the water's edge as they fled from slavery in Egypt, wondering how to escape the pursuing army. Joshua and the people of Israel crossed the Jordan river into the new land God had promised them. John promised a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and tax collectors and soldiers and no doubt many others wondered what they had to do to make a new start in their lives. Jeremiah, the prophet for the first Sunday of Advent, promises a new covenant and a new righteousness. The prophet Isaiah invites the people to "come to the water" and to have a share in God's abundant life, while the vision of the river of the water of life in Revelation is a wonderful scene of healing, blessing and light which encourages us to remain faithful because "See, I am coming soon."



The Baptism service in APBA says that "through the deep waters of death Jesus delivered us from our sins and was raised to new life in triumph." The people at the river have a decision to make. Will Israel trust God enough to step out into the deep waters and face the unknown? How will the crowds who came to the river to see John respond to his strong words? Will they believe in the promises of God, accept the invitation for a new beginning and a new life, or will they be content with the way things are? Will we be one of the people standing at the water's edge this Advent, seeking a new beginning?

Sunday: Advent 1 Exodus 14.21-29 *Crossing the Red Sea*

Monday: Joshua 3.14-17 *Crossing the Jordan River into the land of promise*

Tuesday: Luke 3.1-6 *John the Baptist, prophet of Advent*

Wednesday: Luke 3.7-14 *The people at the river*

Thursday: Jeremiah 33.14-16 *The new righteousness*

Friday: Isaiah 55.1-3 *Come to the water*

Saturday: Revelation 22.1-7 *The river of the water of life*

Pray · Give thanks for the new beginning God offers us every morning

· That we might make a new response to God this Advent

Prayer for Advent

Anna and Simeon and the people in the Temple. People of prayer

Anna and Simeon do not appear on the scene until shortly after Jesus' birth, but they are people of Advent in the sense that they are prayerfully waiting for the fulfilment of God's promises. How did they recognise this newborn child of a humble carpenter as the promised Messiah, the one who would redeem Israel? Luke says it is because of the Holy Spirit and prayer. The Temple is a significant place for this recognition. It was the place where sacrifices were made, where prayers were heard, and where God was revealed.



Malachi, whose voice we hear on the second Sunday of Advent, warns that "the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" and he asks "But who can stand when he appears?" He urges the people to "Return to the Lord" in the same way John the Baptist will many years later - by living lives of righteousness. On the First Sunday of Advent Luke gave us a picture of Jesus praying during the night and

teaching in the Temple during the day. The way for us to stand is to be 'on guard' and 'alert', and above all to be people of prayer. Isaiah had a vision of God in the Temple and felt himself to be lost because of his sin, until the angel declared his guilt departed and his sin blotted out. This recognition of our sinfulness as we stand in God's holy place is part of our Advent discipline, and is important for our relationship with God. Luke's story of the Pharisee and the tax collector demonstrates this clearly. It was the sinful tax collector who left the Temple "right with God".

Zechariah was in the Temple preparing to offer prayers for the people when the angel declared that his own prayer for a son had been heard. Mary was not in the Temple when the angel Gabriel came to her, however the angel declared that she had "found favour with God" and her response to God - "let it be with me according to your word" echoes Isaiah's own response - "Here am I, send me!" Will we be one of the people in the Temple this Advent - the people of prayer?

Sunday: Luke 2.25-38 *Simeon and Anna recognise Jesus as the One to come*

Monday: Malachi 3.1-7a *Return to the Lord*

Tuesday: Luke 21.34-38 *Be on guard and be alert, and pray*

Wednesday: Isaiah 6.1-8 *A vision of God in the Temple*

Thursday: Luke 18.9-14 *The Pharisee and the tax collector pray in the Temple*

Friday: Luke 1.8-17 *Zechariah: a person of prayer in the Temple*

Saturday: Luke 1.26-38 *Mary: a favoured one of God*

Pray · Give thanks that our guilt has departed and God has blotted out our sins

· That we might persevere in prayer

Prayer for Advent