

Worship at Home - By David Godfrey
Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit - Sunday 30th November 2025

Welcome, everyone to this service of worship in the first Sunday of Advent.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed are those who come from East and West, from North and South, to feast in the kingdom of God.

Our opening hymn is number 180 in singing the Faith Or number 85 in hymns and Psalms, if you'd like to follow it in your hymn books at home.

For me, this hymn always marks the beginning of Advent. O come, O come Immanuel and ransom captive Israel.

Hymn: StF 180, H&P 85 'O come, O come, Immanuel'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xtpJ4Q_Q-4&list=RD7xtpJ4Q_Q-4&start_radio=1

Prayers:

Confession and words of assurance (adapted from rootsontheweb.com):

We sometimes want to rush to Christmas, not taking time to value the journey of Advent. We sometimes forget to prepare as we ought. We forget to reflect and seek. We forget to offer help and support to those who need it. We sometimes get wrapped up in things that we want, but they aren't always right, or just, or fair. We sometimes get all wrapped up like a gift, with tape so tight and secure that we cannot see the needs of the world. Forgive us, loving God. **Amen.** Our God of Justice, love and peace, hears our confession, forgives our sins and walks with us in this Advent time. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Reading: Matthew 24:36-44

Reflection:

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a time when many people start to think in earnest about the coming Christmas celebration. You may be surprised and disappointed therefore to find that our bible reading takes us, not to Christmas day, but to judgement day. It is full of death, judgement, suffering and Christ's second coming. The essence of the message behind this text is that Christians need to understand their place in the grand sweep of salvation history. This is a history which begins with the creation and fall, centres on the coming of Christ, journeys through the age of the church, and points forward to Christ's coming again in glory. We take our

place in Christian history somewhere between God's saving acts in Christ and that future day of judgement when he will return and make all things new. Our text reminds us that we live, as Karl Barth said, 'between the times'.

So how do we live 'between the times'? According to Jesus, Christians are called to live in an attitude of faithful, watchful, anticipation. Our text says that one day Jesus may appear in the clouds, suddenly, unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. But before that, Matthew reminds us, Jesus will appear round the corner, suddenly like a hungry person, or a neighbour ill clothed, or someone sick or imprisoned.

And here is the clue about how to live 'between the times'. We see the great sweep of history and we know that one day we will stand before Christ in that future age of glory. But before that we stand before Christ 1000 times in our present age. We find him in our neighbours in need, we speak for him in our ordinary conversations and we serve him in the ordinary tasks to which he calls us. And so we keep watch, stay awake, and stay alert. This is how we live faithfully as God's Advent people.

Hymn: StF 169, H&P 81 'Come thou long expected Jesus'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEd0uWnDGs&list=RDJEEd0uWnDGs&start_radio=1

Prayers:

Intercessions: Lord, we watch and wait for your dawning kingdom. Teach us to walk in the way of your Son. Make your Church a beacon of hope in a dark world and may your Church be alert to the needs of others. We pray that you would be in our communities, homes and places of work in this Advent season. We pray for all who are alone, fearful, sick or filled with grief and loss. May they find in you their healing and hope. We pray also for your reign of peace to enter this world, bringing relief to those who suffer. We remember Gaza, Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan, DR Congo, Haiti and all places where there is hatred and violence. We offer these prayers through him who taught us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom of peace, Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen. Our Father...**

Hymn: StF 172, H&P 237 'Hills of the North rejoice'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYi6pKL4i5o&list=RDdYi6pKL4i5o&start_radio=1

Blessing: As we leave this service of worship, may we open our eyes to the signs of God's presence all around us. May we stay awake and be ready to welcome the

prince of peace. And may the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us always. **Amen.**