

Pew Reflections

The First Sunday of Advent – Sunday 27 November 2022

- Isaiah 2.1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:9-14; Matthew 24.36-44

Keep awake ... you must be ready: as we begin the Western Church Year we are exhorted to take things seriously by being alert and vigilant. How can we prepare ourselves? By finding ways to be closer to Jesus: in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, in serving others.

- Give thanks that we have time to prepare ourselves this Advent: before Jesus is present as a baby at Christmas, before Jesus is present in bread and wine, before Jesus is present as Judge of the world.
- Give thanks for the Church of Bangladesh, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

Text: Robert McLean© Anglican Board of Mission, 2022

Reflection

What a statement of commitment and choice! Let us walk in the light which the Lord gives us! God offers us a way forward together, with a path to follow so that we can live as a flourishing and nurturing community. It is up to us to choose to take the path. Swords and spears are tools of opposition and attack, to respond to inner fear and hate, focused on anger and violence. They are designed specifically to leave negative and violent space between two people, to break communication, and to harm and do damage. 'Swords and spears' can be found in many forms of broken or damaging communication, greed or patterns of living. Their destructive and cruel affect causes insult and injury, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

God's hope-filled landscape creates safe spaces where we work alongside each other, nurturing cooperation and sustainable nourishment for all aspects of life - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. God will teach us the Way of being and doing, and direct a clear path along which to travel.

In God's community, 'ploughs' draw through what has been, breaking apart uncompromising and set patterns, to reveal a fertile terrain as a foundation for nurturing new life into being. 'Pruning knives' help reap the rewards of this togetherness, a flourishing and continuing reality of future community. It does require commitment to the longer-term vision of community, and is predicated on doing it together.

A completely different way to live, to be, in which commune, dream and vision together. That is a pretty great pathway to tread, with a bounty that offers generational change and hope, far beyond the first flourish of renewing life.

Let's choose to walk in the light which the LORD gives us!

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Readings - Sunday 27 November 2022 - First Sunday in Advent

Sentence

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. *Isaiah 2.3a*

Collect

Faithful God,
whose promises stand unshaken through all generations:
renew us in hope,
that we may be awake and alert
watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ,
our Judge and Saviour,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 2.1-5

¹ The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.’
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord !
For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Psalm 122

1 I was glad when they said to me:
‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’
2 And now our feet are standing:
within your gates, O Jerusalem;
3 Jerusalem which is built as a city:
where the pilgrims gather in unity.
4 There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord:
as he commanded Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
5 There are set thrones of judgement:
the thrones of the house of David.
6 O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
may those who love you prosper.
7 Peace be within your walls:
and prosperity in your palaces.
8 For the sake of my kindred and companions:
I will pray that peace be with you.
9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God:
I will seek for your good.

2nd Reading: Romans 13.9-14

9 The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. 11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; 13 let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
For the word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading: Matthew 24.36-44

36 ‘But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.