

Advent Sunday & St Andrew's Day 2020

29 th November Advent Sunday Year B	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 64 vv 1-9 p750 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 Mark 13 vv 24-37 p1019
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ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

How are you feeling this Advent? A time of preparation, a time of preparation for Christmas? A time for contemplation of the Four Last Things – death, judgment, heaven and hell? A time of anticipation for the Coming of the Son of God, as a tiny baby at Christmas and as our Lord and Saviour returning on the Last Day to judge the living and the dead, Appearing in glory to make all things new? A time of longing? Our OT lesson is full of longing. People are desperate. We desperately need God to act on our behalf. He has acted in the past. He is in action today. He will act and He will make all things new. There will be *new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*. We are unworthy even of the least of God's mercies, but we are His people and He is our God.

What are you longing for this Advent? There are many answers to that. I was talking to someone lately and we just didn't quite know what to expect, what it is reasonable to believe will happen, what will be the consequences of the decisions we make. Should we try to make Christmas as normal as possible and risk spreading the virus? Or should we carry on bearing the pain of social isolation with its terrible effects on so many people's lives? Will there really be an effective vaccine in the New Year and, if there is, will life go back to normal? Do we want life to go back to exactly the way it was before COVID in every respect? Or have we perhaps learnt lessons about appreciating what people do for us both professionally and otherwise, about caring for one another and about looking after our environment?

I'm quite determined to light Advent candles for both churches. Today, I know I shall have to do this at home alone when I celebrate the Eucharist by myself on behalf of the Church. I'm hoping to place them in the Advent crowns and light them in Church as we usually do for the remaining Sundays before Christmas, but, even if we can't meet together, I shall still light them at home. *The light shines in the darkness*. In Advent, the light grows as we come closer to the Coming of the Son of God.

He is the One we truly long for, the answer to all our prayers. When I was at college learning to be a vicar, our attention was drawn to today's NT lesson because in it S Paul tells us what the Church actually is. We are a group of people made holy by Jesus Who has called us to be His own and washed us clean of sin in His Blood. We are one with Him and with one another, with Christians in our own congregations and with Christians throughout the world. We are one in love. We are endued with His Holy Spirit and enriched by His grace. We receive from Him the gifts of the Holy Spirit which make it possible for us to be Christians and to live in accordance with His Will for our lives. We live in anticipation of Christ's Return and of our life together with Him in Heaven. We can be confident of all this, despite our own unworthiness, because none of it depends on us. It all depends on God and God is faithful. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Our Lord, in the Gospel, speaks of the day of His return as an awesome day. His Word will not pass away. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not the Word of God. It is a day of reckoning, the Day of Judgment, when the sheep are separated from the goats. The sheep are those who have treated others as they would treat Jesus. The goats are those who have neglected to care for other people, not realising that to mistreat our Lord's brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings, is to abuse Him. We don't know when we shall meet Jesus. We do know, however, that we should always live as ready to receive Him. In any case, that is the best way to live, the only way to enjoy a fulfilled life, to do the good works God has prepared for us to walk in.

The Last Day, the Day of Judgment, a day to be longed for and a day to be feared, the day when there will be *new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*. Is the world ready to receive Him?

Andrew is often thought of as the first missionary. It was he who first brought his brother Simon Peter to meet Jesus. Later on, it will be Andrew whom Philip approaches with some Greeks who want to be introduced to Jesus. It is Andrew who finds the lad with the five loaves and two fishes which Jesus uses to feed 5,000 men plus their wives and children. As Christian people, we enjoy the blessings Paul wrote about in today's NT lesson. We share the longing of Isaiah and the people of God in Isaiah's day. We hear both the promise and the warning contained in our Lord's teaching about the end of time. *The light shines in the darkness*. The light grows as we come closer to the Coming of the Son of God. Jesus is the Light of the world. This is what the Light of the world says to us: (Matthew 5¹⁴⁻¹⁶) *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Like Andrew, we are missionaries. We dwell in the Light. Our Christian calling is to share that Light.

Saint Andrew's Day.

ALMIGHTY God, who didst give such grace unto thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; Grant unto us all, that we, being called by thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil the holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

The Epistle. Rom. 10. 9.

IF thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

The Gospel. St. Matthew. 4. 18.

JESUS, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.