

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit
Sunday Worship Sheet – Sunday 28th November

Our worship for this week was written by Rev'd Rosemary Nunn. You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Today is the first Sunday in Advent: a time of anticipation and preparation as we look forward to celebrating the wonder of the first Christmas and the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ; but also a time for anticipating and preparing for the time when God's kingdom, seen in part through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, will be present in all its fullness.

StF 455. All my hope on God is founded

Prayer of adoration and confession

Eternal God, hope of the world,
we cannot grasp the immensity of your being,
and yet all around us we catch glimpses of your power.
You speak to us in nature's blessings.
You speak to us through science and creativity.
You reveal yourself in the love and the care and the support of those around us.
So often, you show yourself when we most need to see you.
When we least expect it, we see your hand at work.
We are amazed when we see suddenly see something new in Bible words we have read or heard time and time again.
Eternal God, we adore you. Amen.

Prayer of confession

Forgive us, loving God,
when we allow fear to overcome confidence;
when we put our trust in that which is destructive and allow faith and hope to slip through our fingers.
Strengthen us when we are fragile.
Protect us when we are vulnerable,
and use us to bring light and hope to those in darkness and despair.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Bible readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16
 Luke 21:25-36

Reflection

At first glance – and maybe second and third glances, too! – we might almost wonder whether our two Bible readings have become mixed up in some way. Jeremiah, often

thought of as the prophet of doom and gloom, passes on a God-given message awash with hope for the future in spite of tough times in the present. By contrast, the gospel message from Jesus initially appears to be *anything but* the “good news” which is the very meaning of the word *gospel*. Confusing or what?!

Of course, it's true that Luke here records Jesus continuing his warning of intensely painful times ahead, but it's almost as though the question “which do you want first, the good news or the bad news?” is hanging in the air. Among all those sombre and even alarming words from the lips of Jesus, there is the encouragement to “lift your heads” (such positive body language!) because redemption is near. All is not lost: there is hope! God can redeem all sorts of people, all sorts of situations.

Jesus tells a mini-parable about trees: when the leaves start to appear, we know that summer is not far away. Similarly, when cataclysmic events occur, we should know that the kingdom of God is close by and watch for the signs. When Jesus talks about the kingdom of God, he is referring to a state of affairs in which things are done God's way, and God's way involves hope, joy, love, peace and justice. Jesus, whom we shall particularly remember in coming weeks as Emmanuel (“God with us”), embodied those kingdom qualities throughout his life, death and resurrection. He taught and demonstrated through his engagement with ordinary people and through his challenge to the powers that be that new life, new hope, new possibilities were available for those whose lives appeared hopeless and beyond help, and that even death carried the amazing promise of new beginnings. And those hope-filled kingdom principles, expressed in the words and ways of Jesus, will never pass their sell-by date.

For early readers, the turbulent times described in this passage would have meant fears or painful memories surrounding the impending, current or recent siege and fall of Jerusalem, a time of unimaginable horror. Today, our focus is likely to be on the global pandemic and the climate change emergency wreaking havoc and ongoing anguish right across the globe, with wars, oppression and intense poverty making matters even worse for those least able to do anything to alleviate the problems. Then and now, people also face turmoil in their own individual, family and community lives. When the world or even our own small world as we know it appears to be coming to an end, the message is that we mustn't get bogged down with worry and the foolish and even dangerous things we do to alleviate worry, but stay alert as we look for the signs of hope that are always there, however well camouflaged, when times are tough. They will bear the stamp of God's kingdom values, and we should never forget that the invitation of Jesus was “Follow me”: we are to be his partners, looking to introduce and build on his kingdom values of hope, joy, love and justice wherever we see even the slightest hint of possibility. Even the large and impressive leaves of the fig tree begin as tiny buds, and God's good news of hope, too, is real and growing., even in the worst of times.

StF 706. Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Our prayers for ourselves and others are based around StF 168. Come, Lord Jesus, come.
You are invited to make yourself comfortable, then slowly read or sing the words, stopping after each verse to bring to Jesus the names and situations that come into your mind – people you know, news items, yourself

Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come, Lord Jesus, come,
to this world of ours.

Lord, we need you now;
Lord, we need you now;
Lord, we need you now
in this world of ours.

Fill us with your peace;
fill us with your peace;
fill us with your peace
in this world of ours.

Touch us with your love;
touch us with your love;
touch us with your love
in this world of ours.

May we see your light;
may we see your light;
may we see your light
in this world of ours.

Francesca Leftly (b. 1955)

We offer these prayers in your name, Lord Jesus, remembering that you taught us to pray
Our Father,

As ever, be aware that God often asks us to be at least part of the answer to our prayers. Be open to his promptings to action - promptings which may come in the form of a thought that just won't go away, a remark from somebody else, or

StF 169. Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Loving God,
may we step into Advent in hope,
live by hope,
and be signs of hope for all to see.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn 455

- 1 All my hope on God is founded ;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.
- 2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust ;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.
- 3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom passing thought ;
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.
- 4 Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow ;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand ;
joy doth wait on his command.
- 5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all
ye who follow shall not fall.

Hymn 706

- 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.
*Christ, be our light !
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light !
Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

Hymn 169

- 1 Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
- 2 Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.
- 3 Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
- 4 By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone ;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)