

Advent 1.

Happy New Year!! Start of the Church year – lectionary.

But the Church year does not start with a great party or jamboree but with a Time of preparation – not just preparing to celebrate the incarnation but as our Gospel reading today shows preparing for Jesus' return at the end of time.

Patience is one of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians chapter 5 – and Advent like Lent is a time of patiently waiting for something. Advent calendar. Patience is not a modern virtue but were our ancestors much better.

Traditionally, advent has been used to think about the gradual development of Gods revelation of himself to humanity. The first week looking at the start of the bible and the revelation to individuals and families, the second to the era of the Prophets speaking to nations, the third, Gaudette Sunday, looking at John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus, the fourth reflection on Mary as a role model of obedience. Christmas day being the ultimate revelation of God in human form with the Birth of Jesus.

Our Gospel reading today is looking more towards Jesus second coming than his first and that's OK because that will be the culmination of Gods revelation of himself to humanity on earth.

I used to like the punk singer Toyah Wilcox back in the 1980's and one of her songs had the line; "We've been waiting two thousand years for you to come again – now that's a long long time just to learn the truth."

We know that in 23 days Christmas will come but that's all we know. Abram was promised a son with Sarai – but because he was not patient, he had Ishmael with Hagar, a son who was about 14 when Isaac was born. We know that at the time of Jesus there were false messiahs because people would not wait for Gods plan. In the past 2000 years there have been a number of groups that have claimed they know the date for Jesus return – the main thing they have in common is that they have all been wrong.

Being patient and preparing is something that we need to learn and practice. I know I was never patient waiting for Christmas when I was a child but learning to wait patiently is something we all do as we grow older. Hopefully we will be able to us this penitential season to prepare not just for this year's celebration of the wonder of the incarnation. But also to think about the wonder about Jesus return whenever that is and to consider how we can prepare for that as well.

Revd Mark Radcliffe Sunday 3 December 2023

A reading from the Gospel of Mark 13: 24- end

‘But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may**

find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'