

## 29 November 2020 Kirkgate Parish Church service

### **1. Welcome and notices**

Good morning everyone, thank you for calling me to be your minister. I look forward to getting to know you all but please bear with me as I get to know all your names.

### **2. Call to worship**

The Lord has promised that the blind will be able to see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap and dance, and those who cannot speak will shout for joy.

### **3. Reading of the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent candle**

#### **The Lighting of the Advent Candles**

More than 2,000 years ago the Glory of God was revealed to us through the birth of Christ Jesus. A glorious miracle, sent down from heaven.

But many people refused to believe in this miracle, even though they had been waiting for it for so long.

That night, the Lord came to live with a humble and poor family – a family with room in their hearts and faithfulness to the Lord. A family who was ready to receive a miracle.

This morning, we relight the Candle of Blessings and for the first time light the Candle of Miracles.

This light reminds us that not only do miracles happen around us every day, but that every day we are called show God's miraculous love to others. **Let us pray:**

**Lord God, we need your help today. Help us to make room for the miraculous in our lives that the light of Christ might shine through us again. Amen**

### **4. Song: CH4 273-O come, O come, Emmanuel**

### **5. Prayer of adoration and praise.**

Living God, we thank you for faithful people of every age. We pray that we, too, may have faith, despite the darkness of our times, and may look for the coming of Jesus into our world.

Gracious God, Loving Father, we come to your house this morning to praise you for this Season of Advent. We praise you for this time of preparation, thanksgiving, challenge and reflection.

We praise you, that in the fulfilment of your eternal purpose you came to our world in Jesus Christ, revealing the extent of your love, showing us the way to life, allowing us to know you for ourselves.

We praise you that you came again in Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection. Bringing joy where there had once been sorrow. Bringing hope where there had once been despair. Bringing faith where there had once been doubt.

We praise you Father, that through your Holy Spirit you make Jesus real to us each day; you fill us with your power, his peace and his love. And we praise you for the promise that

Christ will come again to establish his kingdom, to bring in a new era, to bring us and all your people everlasting life.

Loving and Merciful God, forgive us that we so easily lose sight of the message of Advent. For, we allow its wonder to be swamped by our preparations for Christmas. By concerns which are so often unimportant. By our carelessness and disobedience in discipleship. Forgive us, that we so often forget your promises. We frustrate your Spirit and we lose sight of your love.

Eternal God, Lord of all creation, meet with us we pray through this time of worship, through your Living Word, through the fellowship we share, and through the risen Christ.

Open our hearts to all you would say to us, and help us to listen so that we may truly celebrate the Advent of your Son and be equipped to serve him better to the glory of your name.

For all this we pray through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray together to say; Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

#### **6. Scripture readings: Mark 13:24-37.**

<sup>24</sup> “But in those days, following that distress,” “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; <sup>25</sup>the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”<sup>26</sup> “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”<sup>28</sup> “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

<sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>32</sup> “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.”<sup>35</sup> “Therefore **keep watch** because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

#### **7. Song: CH4 279 Make way, make way, for Christ the King**

**8. Sermon: Waiting, Keep alert! 29 November 2020: Mark 13:24-37**

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent literally means, coming or arrival. It could also be defined as 'arrival that has been awaited.' We are in the season of waiting for the arrival of Christ as King. 26 days from now we will celebrate The Messiah has come. But that is 26 days away. For now we wait.

For the Christian, nothing is more comforting to know that Jesus is going to return and receive us unto Himself. For starters all the things which trouble us so much will be gone. We will be relieved of that great pressure (those tribulations) or that disappointment we feel. In fact it is this hope that we remember as we come into the season of Advent.

And this morning as we turn to our reading, we need to remember that in the church we always start off the season of Advent talking about Christ's second coming. We do so because we remind ourselves that there is something, we are waiting for beyond the celebration of the birth of Christ Child.

I wonder what comes to mind when you hear the following words , **"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"** (Mark 13:24).

I am sure we are not to take this as literal. Mark is not predicting the future or giving us signs to look for, so that we can predict the future. He is describing a present reality. He is describing what it feels like when the whole world has changed, when things are no longer as they used to be, when there has been a shift in our life. He's describing what it's like when what used to give light and light up our life no longer does, when the stars by which you once navigated no longer point the way, when the powers on which you depended are no longer stable or dependable.

Perhaps every one of us could describe a time in our life when we experienced this. Maybe you are experiencing tough times today. What I've just described are Advent experiences, descriptions, and questions. Every year on the First Sunday of Advent the lectionary holds this before us because it's a truth about our life and world. It's what we face and live with. It is also the life and world into which the Son of Man comes. This truth is always our entrance into Advent.

In those dark threshold moments when our world is shaken we mostly want someone to do something about it – fix it, turn back the clock, undo what has happened, make it like it used to be, get us out of here. Just do something. That's what we could be saying this advent. In (Isaiah 64:1) the prophet is saying to God. "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down". In other words "God, get down here and do something about this pandemic, about our struggles about our differences the list goes on." Now I wonder, who among us here today or those listening from home has not said something like that?

We live in a society that is impatient and yet we must wait for Christmas. So often many people want to speed things up and rather avoid waiting. We celebrate Christmas because Christ came to the earth he created but we also wait for his second coming. Mark says, "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

The question is how do we wait then? There are two different types of waiting. Passive waiting and active waiting. We passively wait for the time to come and we find joy in the traditions that happen between now and the Christmas day. Shopping, buying gifts just to name a few. Yet waiting for Christ's second return is different. We are told in verse 33, Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

The word "**watch**" appears three times in verses 33-37. Jesus wants His people to be on the alert. We are to live every moment in anticipation of His return.

**What does it mean to "watch"?** The word means "**to keep awake, to be attentive, to be ready.**" It has the idea of a watchman who dares not fall asleep while he is on duty. He keeps his eyes and ears open. He always stays on the alert.

While this prophecy is primarily for believing Jews living during the tribulation, there is a word here for us as well. While we live in these difficult times leading up to the second coming of Christ, we should spend our time watching!

Jesus is coming and we need to be on the alert. Our enemies are seeking ways to infiltrate our churches and turn us from the old paths. The world is seeking to grab our attention and captivate us with its treasures. The devil wants to lure us to sleep by telling us that we have plenty of time.

The truth is, Jesus is coming and His people need to be awake and watching. I do not want to be found sleeping when He returns. In verse 34, Jesus describes Himself as a house owner who leaves his business in the hands of his servants. This man assigns each of his servants a specific task and then he takes his journey. The servants do not know when their master will return, so they are encouraged to work at their tasks diligently, so that they will not be found lacking in their duties when their master comes back.

When Jesus saved us, He saved us to go to work for Him. When He saved us, He gave each of us a specific assignment. (**1 Cor. 12:7, 11.**) In other words, Jesus gave you a job to do and He gave me a job to do too. Our duty to Him is to faithfully do those things He has called us to do until He comes for us.

In light of that truth, there are a few questions we could ask and answer for ourselves.

1. Do you know what the Lord wants you to do?
2. Are you doing what He wants you to do?
3. Are you willing to ask Him if you do not know?

There is much to be done while we wait on Jesus to return. His will is that we serve Him faithfully and diligently until He comes for us either in death or in his second coming. Let us stay faithful until Jesus comes!

I don't know about you, when I hear this challenge, I want to sing.

1 He's coming once again,

To set his people free;

That where he is, in glory bright,

His saints may also be.

Then lift the drooping head.

Look up, rejoice and sing;

He comes in majesty sublime,

Salvation's glorious King!

And shouldn't that be the dominating feature of how we live our lives? That we are packed up and ready to go? That we don't put down roots that go too deep into the soil of this world, because this world is not our home? Because the Lord Jesus is going to take this world and refashion it and make out of it a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell.

And that's why we need to be ready. In the name of the father, Son and Holy Spirit Amen.

## **9. Prayer for self and others.**

We unite our hearts again in prayer, let us pray;

Sovereign God, you need nothing from us, for all things are yours, held by us in trust and dependent ultimately on your goodness. Yet, you invite us to give something back. To share in the work of your Kingdom and contribute to the fulfilment of your purpose. For that awesome privilege, we give you our praise, and gladly, we make our response.

Gracious God, this morning we want to thank you for the hope with which you have filled our lives. We give thanks that in the coming of Jesus, you have given us the assurance of your sovereign control over all things.

As we sing your praises and meet with you this morning, we take a moment on this Advent Sunday to remember the coming of Christ to be the Saviour of this world. We want to thank you for the promise of his coming again as Lord of all, and we are grateful for the hope with which Jesus fills our lives.

For, in our times of doubt and despair, the message of his coming, his birth, life, death and resurrection, renews our hope. Thank you, Father, that because of Christ's coming and the

promise of his coming again we can live each day in the knowledge that ultimately you hold all things, including ourselves in your love and care.

Father in heaven, we thank You again for the glory of Your word, how through even this complex chapter You speak such clear truths: that we do indeed need to be ready, that we need to be in Christ; we need to be persevering in the faith; we need to be using the gifts and talents that You have given to us for Your glory; we need to be out and out for Jesus Christ; we need to be witnessing to friends and neighbours and family about the urgency of the hour. We ask that You have mercy upon us. We pray that You would hide Your word now within our hearts, and we would say 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Amen.

**10. Closing song hymn** Ch4 803 We will walk with God, my brothers

**11. Benediction.**

Go with your heart and soul in eager expectation, awaiting the coming of Good News. Be a living witness of that hope, sharing the blessing of God in word and action. The blessing of God the Father, son and Holy Spirit. Amen