

Evensong readings:-

Isaiah ch.1, vv1-20.

Gospel, Matthew ch.21, vv1-13

St.Andrew, Gospel John ch1, vv35-42

by

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Advent Sunday – a new church year beckons, and more immediately, we prepare for the event that transformed the world.

There is a strange parallel between the world that we live in now, and the faith and the church in which we live. The birth of Jesus changed the world forever, despite much of the world being opposed, confused, disbelieving or for whatever cause. The Covid virus has also changed the world, largely, from a year ago, and although brilliant people are preparing vaccines, *for which we need to give thanks*, what we have seen is how easily an infection can spread rapidly in an increasingly integrated and cosmopolitan world community. What has happened once can happen again, although we pray that it will not.

Managing public health is now harder still, and we need to keep the medical professions in our prayers, for what they are, and what they do.

Advent, strangely, is not mentioned in the Bible although to Christians it is implied. It is a feature of the church year for the very good reason that we need to consider the Nativity, its effect on the world, and on us in particular. Advent is a time of preparation and meditation. The traditional approach to Advent focussed on the Patriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, and at Christmas, Jesus himself. The Patriarchs



were the leaders of the Hebrews and Jews from Abraham onwards, and Abraham is venerated as the first known to perceive and worship an infinitely powerful being who created all things. The Advent “trail” brought us the awareness of God and everything that flowed from that. The Advent candle, illustrated, shows, the four candles and that of Jesus in the centre.

Nowadays we have suggestions for the preparation of Advent, carefully thought out with learning and prayer. The loving madness of Christmas gets in the way, especially if one doesn't have the luxury of old age and relative peace, and it is all too easy to lose the thread as we make cakes, puddings, order turkeys and festive food, whilst puzzling what we can buy for presents. Perhaps in strange way, the enforced distancing will leave us more time to think.

The first reading is a hoot. Isaiah condemns the Israelites in blistering terms for their worldliness, corruption and licentiousness. Then in the papers I read of people, today, some 2,700 years later, throwing caution to the winds in search of parties, drink, good times and no doubt good old Commandment No.7. Of course, one understands their loss. Few listened to Isaiah as well. Plus ça change, etc.

Matthew describes the entry into Jerusalem, and the Cleansing of the Temple, which bears out the words of the prophets, condemning corruption. Matthew and John differ on the timing of the Cleansing, but that is not important so much as the depths “worship” in the Temple had become. Everyone from the humblest trader to the Chief Priest was squeezing money out the worshippers for some reason or another – who had travelled from well outside Jerusalem in many cases and were often not wealthy.



On Monday, we remember St. Andrew, brother of Peter and Patron Saint of Scotland. Andrew was a Disciple of John the Baptist, who with another, perhaps Philip, was sent by John to follow Jesus, and it was he who introduced Jesus to Peter. Wikipedia gives Andrew’s birth between 5 and 10AD and his death in Greece at 60AD. He was one who, with his brother and cousins witnessed the most important events in Jesus’ earthly ministry. He was claimed by a prehistoric member of the SNP as

the Patron Saint of Scotland, which engaged the help of the Pope in resisting English domination. (The SNP are still at it but I doubt the Pope is listening. *That’s naughty – Ed*)

We should remember Scotland in prayer, a land where family and friends live, and like Cornwall, a reminder of the beauty of God’s Creation.

