

**Sunday 1st December 2019 Advent 1 - The door of Hope**  
**Isaiah 2:1-5 (Romans 13:11-14) Matthew 24:36-44**

Thank you Joy for your reading of the prophet Isaiah.

‘peoples shall bear their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’ Is 2:4

Gosh... don't we long for this? I time when nations no longer war against each other, a time where people change their tools of destruction into tools of production?

‘The Lords house shall be established... ALL nations shall stream to it’ Is 2:2

When we listen to the news and hear about so much death and destruction, don't we long for wars to cease and true peace to reign?

The words of Isaiah bring us the promise from God that one day this WILL happen.  
It may seem to us long over due, we may wonder if these words will ever come in to fruition  
But we worship a faithful and just and honest God who always keeps His promises and so we can trust that one day, in His timing, ALL nations will stream to the house of our Lord and they will war no more.

Maybe we have lost some hope or expectation of that future reality?  
But when we know what we are waiting for we are attentive.  
When we know what we are waiting for we are wide awake and alert.

The other week Mum & I went in to Camberley on the bus. When it was time to come home we were waiting just inside the doors to The Atrium and were chatting to another couple who were waiting there. I may have been chatting to them but I constantly had 1 eye out on the street looking for the bus to come up the road. I was actually only half paying attention to them. I knew I was waiting for the 194 bus and I was watching very carefully for its arrival.

In our gospel reading today we hear a brief summary of that Old Testament character Noah. You know the story...  
Noah did not know the day or time of the rain but had built his ark according to the instruction and waited for the rain to come (Genesis 6-8) In Gen 7:10 we read that once they were all on the ark they waited 7 days before the rain started.  
Imagine...living in a hot, dry country, with your immediate family and all those animals on board, waiting for the rain to start. I bet they were watching with their ears & their noses as well as their eyes!

When we know what we are waiting for we are attentive and the wait is not boring.

How many of us have opened a door on our advent calendars already? And eaten the chocolate?  
Drunk the bottle of...? :-)

I was in school with Yr 2 this week and when I raised the topic of Advent & Advent calendars, there was GREAT excitement. They know what they are waiting for and there is no boredom there.

They know what they are waiting for and they watch and wait with HUGE eagerness and alertness... sadly many of them are only expectant of Santa in 24 days time !

As Christians we are waiting for more than the arrival of Santa, however exciting and magical that may be for us.

We are waiting for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Christ child, our Messiah, our Saviour

We know that 'love came down at Christmas'

Advent is a hope filled and joyful time of waiting and preparation. People often say to me about this being a busy time for me and I find myself saying, yes but it is fun busy. There is excitement and joyful anticipation.

But if our waiting is only for this festive season, only for the celebration of our Saviours past birth day, then we are missing a vital point. We are waiting for just a part, not the whole promise

Last week we were celebrating Christ the King and the gospel reading this morning is Jesus foretelling of His second coming, Jesus returning as King and recognised as such by all.

We have a hope beyond 25th December 2019

Essential to our faith is the promise of his second coming when

ALL nations shall stream to the mountain of the Lord and  
nations shall not lift sword against nation

We have a hope that goes far beyond 25th December.

We have a hope that goes on for eternity.

Many people live lives of emptiness and desolation.

MANY live lives without the Hope that we have.

That emptiness and desolation can take on many, many different forms... I am sure you don't need me to tell you that.

Just last night, someone who has lost several people close to them including their brother, said to me that she envied people of faith, like me, because of the assurance we have in what happens after physical death.

Emptiness and desolation take on many different forms

As Christians, we have a light, a hope to share with them. A hope and a joy that goes far beyond 25th Dec, great and joyful and exciting as that is

By the way... please take 5 of our Christmas invites and give them to people who you know. You could just pop the invites through someones door, but how about you actually knock on the door and personally invite those people to our Christmas celebrations using the invite cards.

In Advent we are anticipating our Saviours birth, people want to be invited to something that brings them joy and hope, and we have that place to bring them this Christmas.

But our hope goes beyond celebrating a past event this Christmas and looks forward to the return of Jesus, to His second coming when He will restore us and our world to it's full and peaceful conclusion. That time when wars cease and we will live in peace and harmony with all.

The catch is that we do not know exactly when that day will be. Jesus Himself said to His disciples that 'the day and hour no one knows' (Matt 24:36) 'The Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour' (Matt 24:44)

Romans 13 Lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, live honourably  
Put on the Lord Jesus Christ Rom 13:14

I was flicking through the Church Times yesterday and read this...

'Hope is like a door - sometimes barely ajar, sometimes wide open - through which we can catch a glimpse of a different future. And that glimpse transforms the present' Sister Teresa White

Our present is touched by a future reality

Christ's second coming is part of our day to day world

He is present in different ways - word, sacrament, love of His people, answered prayers...

Our present is touched by the promise of a future reality for which we are waiting that gives us hope

Do we know what we are waiting for because only then will we wait expectantly and attentively

Not just 25th but a date and time unknown when He will return and our longing for a peaceful world where nations no longer war with nations will arrive

The door of Hope is open, we catch a glimpse of a different future.

Lets wait expectantly and attentively this Advent and beyond.