

Advent 1 Journeying together through Advent Promise

Intro to journey of Advent

I am sure all of us have been on a long journey of some kind or other

Maybe in this country or to somewhere abroad

Many may have been for good and exciting reasons although sometimes it is for something difficult or sad

Pat wrote in last months edition of The Hoot about her journey up to Lindisfarne with Ian a couple of months ago.

We often think of a journey as a physical event but our lives can also be thought of as a journey, an emotional journey and/or a spiritual journey

I would like us to think about this Advent as a journey, journeying together in to this new season, also the start of the church year, and also the start of our journey together; me the new priest with you the established church family.

When we think about a long or significant journey there are many different aspects to it but this Advent I would like us to think about 4

There is the PROMISE of something or somewhere or someone at the end of it

For Pat there was the promise of Holy Island - a place she had longed to visit

But there is always the promise - the reason for our journey

And then there is PREPARATION

Whenever we go on a journey there has to be some preparation, getting ourselves ready and the the things we need to take

A couple of weeks ago at tea & toast it was the day before Maureen & Graham were heading off to Australia. People were asking if they had packed, who did the packing, what sorts of things were they taking..... Preparation is vital for any sort of journey

At some point we also tell people about where we are going, or where we have been. The more exciting the journey often the more we talk about it. We could call this PRAISE or PROCLAMATION - we let people know where or what we are or have been doing

And there is nearly always a part of the journey that needs PERSEVERANCE. I can remember when I was travelling back from teacher training college with a friend who had a car. We were driving back from Lincoln to Maidstone for our Easter break and we got stuck on the M24 for 4 hours. We were totally jammed and we had to persevere there was no turning back !

I'd like us to think of Advent this year as a journey both individually and together,
a journey towards Christmas,
a journey at the start of the church calendar,
a journey together in to the new chapter of our lie together here at St George's
but most importantly a journey with God.

I believe God wants us to journey together with Him 24/7 not just in our corporate times of worship each Sunday

And I would love this Advent to be a journey, with Him, and each other, towards the Promise He has made to us

I will fulfil the PROMISE

The words from the reading in Jeremiah are words from the Lord

'The days are surely coming when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah....'

The promise that was made in chapter 29 that the people would be brought out of exile

The promise in chapter 29 goes on to those often quoted verses... I know the plans I have for you.

Plans to prosper and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future.

Those verses then go on to say - often less quoted ... Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I WILL LISTEN to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

What a great promise from God

I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David - his line of monarchy will be restored

This is the promise of Christmas - the promise of a Messiah

But there is also a promise beyond that when the righteous branch will execute justice and righteousness

Think back to sermon a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the Kingdom of God

Paul - in the reading from Thessalonians talks about the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints

There is the 2 fold promise the coming of the Messiah - Jesus birth

the Son of Man returns with power & great glory - Jesus 2nd coming

This is not an empty promise - how often do we break the promises we make, or have had promises made to us broken

The Lord said I WILL fulfil my promise and He never breaks His promise - rainbows!

Luke 21

Jesus reminds us of the promise of hope in the seasons

Bulbs, that we have not seen any evidence of for months - are poking up out of the soil and more will be seen as spring approaches

And they will produce a great spread of spring colour

A reminder of the hope that spring and then summer are on their way

Like the fig trees that Jesus mentions that sprout leaves as a sign of summer

But Jesus urges us to be alert, be on our guard so that our hearts are not weighed down or caught out vs34 because His second coming will happen and there is a word of caution about it.

Are we ready for it whenever that great event happens? Because it will come, and it will have consequences, and we need to be prepared because no one knows the time or place.

Paul prays for the hearts of the Thessalonians to be strengthened in holiness so that we can be blameless before God at the second coming of Jesus.....

Advent is a time of promise

the promise of the celebrations of the birth of the Messiah - Jesus - at Christmas

Christ's coming again to execute justice and righteousness

A time of excitement and hope

A time to journey together

A time of preparation that we are going to think more about next week

But I would love us to start this wee to practice good habits, good for advent but for the rest of the year too

Church New Year resolutions rather than January New Year resolutions!!

And if we all do them together then maybe we can encourage one another and make them more achievable!

Spend 5 minutes each day praying

Verse from Psalm is good or thinking about the focus for the week

This weeks being PROMISE

Use the calendar sheet to note a word that stands out or just colour in as you pray to help you stay awake!! :-)

Journey together