

# Advent 1

By God's Grace may I speak in the name of the God who was and is and is to come. Amen.

Have you ever waited for a really big thing in your life? Like maybe a wedding, a promotion, a new job, a new home or a baby to be born? Waiting for these big things is a funny thing. There is something big and new on the horizon, but somehow life is still going on as usual all around us. But also not, because this big new thing is also taking up considerable time and energy in the ways you need to prepare for it. This big new thing, the new job, the new home or a baby, is not yet here, yet the future is changing the present, while the present also seems to go on unchanged.

Waiting for something new and big is a funny thing. Waiting like that can be full of excitement and hope for the new possibilities of the future. But waiting like that can also carry fear and anxieties with it, of the unknown, of whether we will be able to meet the new challenges coming our way.

Advent is meant to be a time to remind us that we are still waiting. Waiting for Jesus to come again. To me the pregnant Mary powerfully embodies Advent. The pregnant Mary, and with her Josef, is waiting to meet her baby, the baby announced to her through the angel Gabriel. The baby that is her son, but also the Son of God. She would have felt the baby kicking in her belly and might have tried to imagine what he would look like, wondered about what it would be like to be a mother, looked forward to holding him, but also at times maybe was fearful, if she was ready to be a mum, if she would get it right, worried about all the fearful possibilities the future of her child held. And as she waited,

life went on regardless, the cooking and cleaning needed to be done as usual. And in between the usual rhythms of life, she likely would also have been preparing things for her baby, clothes, nappies and other necessities.

We have a new Nativity set, which has been created for us by students of St Margaret's School. In our new set we have a pregnant Mary, which is out here today. So maybe you want to come and look at this pregnant Mary at the end of the service and reflect a bit, how her waiting might guide you in your prayerful waiting this Advent.

Advent is a time to remind us that we are still waiting, waiting for Christ to return and to finally put all things to right and fully establish God's Kingdom, where hunger shall be no more, where there shall be no more tears, no more goodbyes, no more pain, but justice and equity for all. We are still waiting, there are little shoots of God's Kingdom here and there, but we are still waiting, just like the pregnant Mary is waiting. And while we are waiting, as Jesus tells us in today's gospel reading, life goes on as usual:

**... they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, ...**

Life goes on as usual as we wait for Christ to come again to fully establish God's Kingdom. We don't know how much time we have, but as Christians we believe that in the end we will have to stand before God and give an account of what we have done with the time we have had.

**if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.**

Advent is a time to remind us, that we are still waiting. While we are waiting, life goes on as usual, but Jesus reminds us that we must not forget to be ready for his coming at an unexpected hour.

Life is busy with the many demands of life, looking after children, the shopping that needs doing again, our relentless workload, the bills piling up, needs and worries all around us, all that can swallow us whole at times.

Advent invites us to take a moment to look up from our busyness and take stock. How are we spending our time, our life, what is God's place within our life? If God were to suddenly and unexpectedly ask for an account of how we have spent our time, is there anything we might wish to change? What are our priorities in life, and how would they hold up in the eyes of God?

Advent is a reminder that we are still waiting. And so now, at the beginning of Advent I would like to invite us to think about one or two little ways in which we could make time this Advent to have some time to prayerfully reflect. Maybe you reserve a few minutes each morning during Advent to sit with a candle to pray and reflect, maybe you decide to join in with Morning Prayer here in the church or online for this time, maybe you decide to join the Advent Groups on Mondays during Advent, or you commit yourself to one half-hour-walk every week, to have some time to reflect and pray. Different things work for different people and at different times of our lives. How are you going to watch and wait this Advent?

Amen.