

## First Sunday Advent 1 December 2013



*Illustration 1: First Sunday of Advent*

Isaiah 2: 1-5  
Psalm 122  
Romans 13: 11-14  
Matthew 24:36-44

**These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word**

The first Sunday of Advent heralds for us a new year, a new beginning and the possibility and potential of a new creation.

There is a delightful energy in all of today's readings and an amazing harmony; all of the readings seem to be so fitting as we contemplate a new year. Each of the readings gives us an orientation and an invitation to walk into the 'Divine Life'.

As we embark on a new year, will we take up the invitation in the readings and participate in a new creation? Can we find within the Divine voice that forever speaks to every moment; "I AM making all things new"?

Isaiah invites us: "*Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.*"

Paul invites us: "*you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.... Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light*".

And Christ invites us: "*Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.... be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.*"

If, and it is a big if, if we can hear today's invitation we might find within a place where we too can sing the psalm: "*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"*"

Today we are given an arrow, like a compass the readings point us toward a new year and a new creation, and more they illuminate for us the potential of a new reality for tomorrow.

During each of the four Sundays of Advent we will read from Isaiah, and that gives us an opportunity to tune in and open ourselves to the prophetic vision, to see tomorrow through different eyes, to feel the newness of tomorrow and know ourselves as 'the bright morning star'.

There is some irony when we read Isaiah in the context of the present geopolitical landscape. Isaiah sees a universal peace birthed out of Jerusalem; and yet, in the present age Jerusalem, and Israel, is one of the most militarised places on earth and seemingly the centre of all that is against peace in the Middle East. What does that tell us about Isaiah's vision?

It could be argued that the present day problems in the Middle East are themselves the result of a literal, a primitive, reading of the Scriptures; for Israel argues its rightfulness based on an understanding of itself as God's chosen and with a biblical affirmation that its place in the world is divinely granted. However, Jerusalem today can serve as an invitation to us to look deeper into the texts and to seek to understand the voice of the prophets as a universal word, for the Divine Word is only heard when it is addressed to all people everywhere.

Isaiah's prophetic enlightenment and the Divine energy he seeks to voice is illuminated for us when we read this text for ourselves and for all.

*"In days to come"* – The new year.

*"the mountain of the Lord's house"* – the community of faith

*"shall be raised above the hills"* - shall be seen, made visible

*"all the nations shall stream to it."* – the community will be inclusive of all.

Isaiah speaks not of the Anglican Church, but of a community of faith that is open to all. And again he speaks of more for this inclusive community *"shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

This highly improbable vision is beyond our imagination, and to be even more real, it is not on the radar for our new year.

And that's because we are only looking with our eyes...

The prophetic vision, the possibility for tomorrow needs to be 'seen', or can only be seen, with our intention, our desire, our prayer, action, participation and our very being.

If we can be birthed into such insight at Christmas then we can contribute to the realisation of such a prophetic reality. But if Christmas is another nostalgic remembering of childhood delights and a rekindling of Santa coming to our rescue, then we will only ever see that for which our eyes have vision, we will have no insight into the unseen and will never go beyond repetition of today.

Isaiah invites us: *"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."*

Paul invites us: *"you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.... Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light"*.

And Christ invites us: *"Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.... be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."*

All of these invitations invite us into a new reality that wakes us up from the daydream of today into the imagination of tomorrow.

During Advent we are asked to consider what key we will live our life in, what song we will give voice to. Will we live our life with the repeat key, the redial, the replay or will we hit the enter key?

Later in Advent we will hear from John the Baptist, and we will be introduced to the repent Key...

This is a time for us to *“lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light”*.

There is a real sense of Adventure in Advent, for advent is the beginning of adventure, and that comes with a warning: *“Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left.”*

As we go into a new year some will be left behind, for them the year ahead will be a repeat of the year just gone...

Advent, like lent is a ‘time of trial’, we should test ourselves and be awake to the signs of life that determine our arrow.

Do we repeat ourselves, do we replay the past and use references that redial old numbers... or do we enter into openings that take us beyond our imaginations.

Yesterday is but today's memory, and tomorrow is today's dream.

**Khalil Gibran**

Lets start the new year with a simple poem:

If each grain of sand were to say:

One grain does not make a mountain, There would be no land.

If each drop of water were to say:

One drop does not make an ocean, There would be no sea.

If each note of music were to say:

Each note does not make a symphony, There would be no melody.

If each word were to say:

One word does not make a library, There would be no book.

If each brick were to say:

One brick does not make a wall, There would be no house.

If each seed were to say:

One seed does not make a field, There would be no harvest.

If each of us were to say:

One person does not make the difference, There would never be love and peace on earth.

You and I do make the difference, Begin today and make the difference.

~~ Author Unknown ~~