

## Advent 29 Nov 2015

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25: 1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-38

### [Advent 29 Nov 2015](#) Textweek

The first reading today seems designed to open us up to a future of promise; "*The days are surely coming..... when I will fulfil the promise*"; and that is a good beginning to Advent, for each of us and all of us might consider our orientation toward tomorrow. As we begin a new church year we might each consider what promise the year ahead holds for us, and for the part we play in this community and in relation to the wider community.

The words of the Psalm again seem to underline the movement associated with Advent, an aligning of life with divine ways; "*Show me your ways, O Lord: and teach me your paths*", could so easily be a reference to the path of the three wise ones who are guided by the star, the heavenly light.

The reading from the letter to the church at Thessalonica identifies another component for the Advent journey. The prayer of Paul is that he might again see members of the church in order to "*restore whatever is lacking in your faith*".

In our own movement toward the celebration of Christmas we too might engage this process of 'restoration' for ourselves.

In this process we are invited to consider that which is 'lacking' in our faith and perhaps also that which is 'lacking' in our community.

The madness of present buying that accompanies Christmas is perhaps a distorted version of this Advent process. The modern western world seeks to fulfil its 'lacking' by acquiring more and more possessions. perhaps we would learn more about ourselves and each other if we considered what our true 'lacking' really is; what is the emptiness that seeks to be filled?

What is it that we desire to strengthen both hearts and holiness?

Next we encounter the change of pace of the gospel reading, and today's gospel is often interpreted in light of a literal 'end of time'.

Simplistically, the gospel reads as if "*Heaven and earth will pass away*" and at the same time we will see "*the Son of Man coming in a cloud*".

However, if we read the text attentive to both movement and process, and seek a meaning for ourselves today, we might again see an invitation to more fully engage in Advent.

Central to the gospel text is *"you know that the kingdom of God is near"*.

This text speaks of another reality that we actually 'know', a version of life that perhaps we only glimpse because our *"hearts are.. weighed down with dissipation... and the worries of this life"*.

Certainly we all feel that sense of *"fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world"*.

How we cope with all the *"distress among nations"* is another good question for our Advent reflections, even if that requires an acknowledgement that we have 'switched off'; for the gospel today invites us beyond coping and into another reality whereby we *"stand before the Son of Man"*; an invitation to realise, or make real, our Christ-likeness.

And perhaps we can now begin to see that Advent is not a movement toward the birth of Jesus, but a movement toward the birth of our Christ-likeness.

And some of the pointers toward our becoming are in the gospel text;

*"Be alert at all times"*; switch on rather than off; *"Be alert at all times, praying"*.

*"Have the strength"*; rather than constantly recounting our weakness.

*"Escape all these things"*; find our freedom from the 'world's distress'.

And then find ourselves standing *"before the Son of Man"*

Today the three wise ones symbolically set out on their journey, and so too our Advent journey begins.

The Church has sought to signpost the journey with Advent candles that light the way to the birth of our Lord; it is a primitive tradition that takes us nowhere for it ends only in a mythological birthday celebration and misses the very essence of the journey followed by the wise ones.

The journey of the Magi was not lit with candles, but rather followed a heavenly light and was a journey initiated from a desire to give.

Our families will also have passed on to us the primitive tribal tradition of doing the same thing every year with those we know in the comfort of our homes, avoiding the risk of the journey and the risk of extending our giving into an unknown land of new birth.

And our culture will promote the Coles/Myer/Woolworths version of Advent whereby it is the cherries, prawns and the turkey and the ham that take centre stage, feeding the already fed rather than seeking out that which fills life's true emptiness.

The wise ones are an icon, inviting us to set out this Advent, expectant but with undetermined destination, to be led by a desire to give and to be guided by the heavenly light above all else...

Peter Humphris