

Dear friends,

The last Sunday before Advent is known as “Christ the King” and we sung lustily some magnificent hymns. St. Peter’s choir, some 21 strong now, was magnificent as ever and I cannot wait for the Advent Carol service next Sunday evening at 6pm. I know it will be a fitting introduction to a season which is marked by anticipation.

After the Sunday service we walked to Colaton Raleigh for a very pleasant rendezvous with mulled wine and mince pies – Thank you Fran and Jan. With the nights drawing in, by the time we left Colaton Raleigh, the sun was setting and there was a magnificent sunset. Walking by a river in twilight amidst the beautiful Devon countryside it was very easy to feel that all was well with the world.

28th November - Advent Sunday

Archdeacon Trevor is presiding at the two morning services at St. Peter’s and I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael’s in the morning and at the keenly anticipated Advent Carol service at St. Peter’s at 6pm.

Jeremiah 33: 14-16. A lovely piece prophesying the future salvation of the people of Israel by a “righteous branch” whose actions produce a righteous community and Jerusalem becomes known as “The Lord is our righteousness”. Christians recognise that righteous branch as coming in the person of Jesus Christ of course, and as such, a saviour not just for Israel but for the whole world and that righteous community is the church.

1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13. A letter written by Paul in the light of Timothy’s visit and assessment of how things are going. There are definite problems but the overall picture is encouraging. The return of Jesus is posed not as a threat to keep the troops in line but as the conclusion to the entire human story. They are urged to nurture the bonds of community and for that community to be made Holy, as an example to the society within which they exist and witness.

Luke 21: 25-36. The essential message here is not when and where any end occurs but that Christ’s disciples must live every day as if it were their last and do so in love. If “This generation” (v 32) is taken literally then we are talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. If not taken in a temporal sense it could refer to anyone who opposes the rule of God at any time.

Save the date!

In February next year I will be turning 60. Obviously, I know I look far too young and this will come as quite a shock (not least to me). Louise also celebrated a significant birthday last year but because of lockdown we weren't able to celebrate properly so we are holding joint celebrations next year in time honoured fashion. On the week of my birthday we will be celebrating it on Dartmoor but on our return we intend to hold a joint celebration birthday party at the vicarage on Friday 25th February to which everyone is invited. The details haven't been worked out yet but the basic instructions are to have fun and enjoy ourselves.

Thought for Today - Advent

No one can argue that the church is unaffected by the spirit of the age and the anticipation of Christmas. The result of this is that Christmas crowds out the season of Advent, and we hardly have time for the “earnest looking forward” or waiting for the coming of the king in his kingdom NOW. The thrust of Advent is the expectant longing for Christ's kingdom and the spirit of repentance that engenders. I have talked about repentance (Metanoia) quite often and the reflective, restrained spirit of Advent is reflected in the fact that the liturgical colour is purple. So we need to hold together the twin pressures to see Advent as not merely the prelude to Christmas and to see it as looking forward to the coming of the kingdom in all its fullness. We tip our hat towards the former by using the symbol of an advent wreath which has five candles in all, one lit every Sunday climaxing with the central candle (representing Christ) being lit on Christmas eve/day. There are several different traditions that tell us what each candle stands for, but the one that accords best with the lectionary readings (and so the one we will be using) is.

Advent 1 – The patriarchs

Advent 2 – The prophets

Advent 3 – John the Baptist

Advent 4 – The Virgin Mary

Christmas day – The Christ

The Prayer for Today is from the church of South India.

**Almighty God,
Who in many and various ways spoke to your chosen people by the prophets,
And has given us in your Son our saviour Jesus Christ
The fulfilment of the house of Israel,
Hasten we beseech thee,
The coming of the day when all things shall be subject to Him,
Who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit
Ever one God, world without end.
Amen**

Love and peace,
Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk