

St Andrew & The First Sunday of Advent

This weekend is Saturday the 30 November, the feast of St Andrew and Sunday the 1 December, the first Sunday of Advent.

Salt of the Sound sing, 'Come Thou Long Expected Jesus'.

Today marks the beginning of the Season of Advent – a beautiful season when we prepare ourselves to celebrate the coming of Christ at Christmas. But we also prepare ourselves, really question ourselves, about whether we're ready for the coming of Christ in Judgement at the end of the world. Over the next few weeks, our readings will focus on the longings of the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah through our readings from the prophet Isaiah and the Gospel readings surrounding the birth of Jesus. A number of readings, like this weekend's reading from the Gospel of Matthew, are the stories which Jesus tells about the end of the world.

Today, Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of God coming suddenly, and in a way that isn't expected; all those people going about their daily tasks, one of them taken, another left. Does this weekend's reading make it sound as if Jesus, the Son of Man, is trying to catch us out?

What if, instead, we look at it another way. If we truly love Jesus, surely we would want to be taken with him? Does this focus on love change how you see this reading?

When Jesus came preaching and teaching, how did he tell people to be ready for the Kingdom?

These words of Jesus are probably a prediction about both the destruction at the end of the world, and also about the destruction of `the temple in Jerusalem. He spoke about both, and his listeners' memories linked the two together. Natural and manmade disasters have often been linked to the end of the world. How do these predictions make you feel? Embarrassed? Frightened? Watchful?

Jesus is the healer, is he not? He is like the Good Samaritan in his own story. What did he do for the wounded traveller? He put oil and wine on the wounds, bandaged him up, took him to the inn to recover. And who paid the bill, can you remember?

The best way to hear today's passage from Matthew is to remember that you love Jesus and want to be a faithful disciple. As you listen to the passage again, which images do you see most visibly? The story of the flood? Or people doing everyday tasks being taken away?

Thinking about the end of the world is scary, and the best thing to remember when meditating on this passage is that you love Jesus and want to be a faithful disciple. As our time of prayer comes to an end, ask the Lord for the grace you need to be a faithful and loving servant. Ready and waiting at his return.

O Wisdom, Lord and Ruler, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Rising Sun, King of the Nations, Emmanuel, Come, Lord Jesus.