

Sunday Thought

27th November 2022 First Sunday of Advent

Readings

Isaiah 2: 1 - 5

Psalm 122

Romans 13: 11 - 14

Matthew 24: 36 - 44

Day Dreams



The year's repeated pictures of conflict in Ukraine have sparked barely remembered personal memories of nights spent with my mother, brother and Timmy the cat, in the comparative safety of our garden air-raid shelter. As with millions of other children our dreams came on the back of questions - 'When will it be day?' 'When will Daddy come?' The memory also suggested my 'Thought' about today's Advent Sunday Bible readings.

Isaiah's *Day Dream* was inspired by a message from God calling again for nationwide repentance and the people's return to him which will bring renewal to a land obsessed with treasures, chariots and idols - *wealth, war and worldliness*. The prophet is given a dream, like the assuring voice of a war-shelter mother comforting her children - 'the day is coming!' 'God has promised, Isaiah tells his people, 'God has promised a day when Moriah, the Temple Mountain in King Daid's City, between Zion and the Mount of Olives will be a focal point for all the world's people. It will be the highest place, not in feet or metres but in esteem and wonder. It will be 'God's Place'. People from all the nations will make pilgrimage to it to learn the Lord's Law and his designs for his world. At that place, where the nation's life began, his words will bring enlightenment, will settle international disputes, will teach the ways of peace, will give knowledge of truth and justice. *At the Lord's Place* his people will be encouraged to live by faith in him. That day is coming, God told Isaiah, for all who will meet him at *his place and dream the Advent Dream!* The promised day dawned just six miles south-east of the Temple Mount when a humble birth brought together humble, local shepherds and wise scholars from a wider world of learning, to witness the Coming of God's Son - the Christ!. By tradition on the first Sunday of Advent - *Advent means the Coming* - Christians also look forward to the glorious angel-drenched *Coming Again* of Jesus as King and Judge of all people and nations which will be the fulfillment of all God's purposes and the inauguration of the glorious reign of Peace which he won for all people, in Jesus, by his life, death and rising again.



In the gospel reading today Jesus speaks to his disciples about that other 'Coming'. Like children in the shelter his men are eager to know, 'When will the day come? When is Father coming?' Jesus is not concerned with diary bookings. 'Only the Father knows'. There is no question about the event, he assures them, but as for the time ... 'It will be as in the days of Noah when the great flood of divine judgement came. Life will go on as usual until 'the sudden dawn of that day.' An expected question followed from his men, 'So, what do we do in the meanwhile?' to which Jesus replied, 'Live alert to the warning sirens.' Be always ready to lift the black-out curtain and watch the dawn!'

Paul, following the same theme, gives Christians at Rome more detail about how to be ready. *As you long to see glimpses of the pre-dawn glow, fulfill your one obligation to God – Keep the commandments. Obey the whole law. Live by Love!* For Paul, 'Living by love is the 'Jesus weapon' by which we drive away shameful, harmful works of darkness like, 'unruly, indecent, immoral actions and all that way of life which is stimulated by unloving, quarrelsome, jealous, discordant, unforgiving hearts. Jesus-love in our lives gives strength to overcome the darkest life-moments, and to be always ready to meet the Lord who is ALL LOVE. One earnest disciple prayed that every day her life would pass 'touches of infectious love' to all with whom she came into contact.

Born at the far end of larger families, I did not know my grandparents, though I am sure their prayers have played an important part in my life. However, my father left me a wonderful picture memory of his father. Each evening, weary



from another day's labour in the foundry at the London Docks, he would rock himself sleepily in his big arm chair. Before bed-time he would sing a favourite verse from the Moravian hymn 'Forever with the Lord.' *Here in this body pent, absent from him I roam, yet nightly pitch my moving tent a day's march nearer home!* It was a picture

of living faith as the darkness of more war, greater unemployment, and deeper poverty crept closer – He had a live, loving faith, ready to meet his Lord.

At God's House. [A prayer with Psalm 122 in mind]

I have found the Lord's House in different guises:

Rich choral praise In city-church mansions – be careful not to touch,
you'll make dust for angel cleaners;

In rural barns where lambs are lulled by worship melodies and higher notes
stir bats among oak beams;

A welcome to the one shared bowl of rice and fish, communion set out for all
on the hard-pressed mud floor, beneath a grass-thatch roof:

The farm kitchen, where warm, new-born lambs wait for their next bottle-
feed, undisturbed by songs and prayers of faith.

In every place I feel at home.

It is your house, Lord, filled with the beauty of your loving presence, your careful kindnesses
Lord, it's good to be at home with you and your people.

