

The Second Sunday before Advent - YEAR B 15 November 2015

How are we to respond when we face the violent upheaval of our world, or when others use mockery to dominate us in personal power plays? What does it mean to trust in God's grace and protection, to live out the peace and justice of God's Reign in a world of war and injustice? The call to peace is always a difficult one to answer, both personally and collectively, but it is a call we must face in worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

1 Samuel 1:4-20: Hannah grieves her inability to conceive, and the mockery of Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, so when the family goes to the temple she prays for a child. After Eli accuses her of being drunk, she explains that she is grieving and he blesses her. Following this, she falls pregnant and gives birth to Samuel.

OR **Daniel 12:1-3**: In a time of great trouble, the people whose names are written in God's scroll will be rescued, some being resurrected to life and others to disgrace. But, those who are wise and lead others to righteousness will shine like stars.

1 Samuel 2:1-10: Hannah sings a song of praise for God's grace and justice in response to Samuel's birth and dedication to the Lord. She celebrates God's strength and holiness, and proclaims that God shatters the bows of the powerful, while filling the hungry with bread, that God gives life and raises the poor, while also bringing the wealthy low. Note the strong resonances here with Mary's Magnificat.

OR **Psalms 16**: A Psalm in praise of God's protection and blessing, God's instruction and guidance, God's presence and God's ways of life.

Hebrews 10:11-14, (15-18), 19-25: Jesus offered the perfect once-for-all sacrifice and then sat down at God's right hand. He perfected God's people, and now we can enter God's presence with confidence because of our faith, the cleansing of God, and our high priest in God's house. In response we are to hold on to our hope, and motivate each other to acts of love and goodness.

Mark 13:1-8: As they leave the temple, Jesus' disciples are awed by the size and beauty of the building, but Jesus predicts that it will be destroyed. When the disciples ask for a sign, Jesus warns them about false messiahs who will come, reports of war, earthquakes, and famines. But, these, he explains, are just the beginnings of the end.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

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http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=1%20Samuel%201:204-20%0Acw%20Psalm%2016%0AHebrews%2010:2011-14,15-18,19-25%0AMark%2013:201-8

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O God,
whose blessed Son was manifested
that he might destroy the works of the devil,
and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life;
Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope,
we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear again with power and great glory,
we may be made like unto him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit,
he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

and/or

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
Grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory,
we may be made like him
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

POST COMMUNION

Gracious Lord,
in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope.
Bring us at the last to that pure life for which we long,
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

PRAYERS

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Providing God,
you journeyed with Ruth
and comforted Hannah
when their lives were burdened by grief.
Grant us faith to believe you will provide a future
where we see none,
that bitterness may turn to joy
and barrenness may bear life. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit

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through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,

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that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

God our rock,
you hear the cries of your people
and answer the prayers of the faithful.
Grant us the boldness of Hannah
that we may persist in prayer,
confident in your steadfast love. Amen.

Timeless One,
you create all moments of our lives,
giving each its meaning and purpose.
Strengthen us to witness continually
to the love of Jesus Christ,
that we may hold fast in times of trial,
even to the end of the ages. Amen.

Heavenly Lord, you long for the world's salvation: stir us from apathy restrain
us from excess and revive in us new hope that all creation will one day be
healed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

Eternal God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle, we
pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your pure and
peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in
justice and peace your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the
knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist
Worship*

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to be the light of the world.
Free us from all that darkens and ensnares us, and bring us to eternal light
and joy; through the power of him who is alive and reigns with you, in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Methodist
Worship*

MEDITATION

Just because people are religious does not mean that they are nice. The
religious leaders at the time of Jesus were hell bent on killing him because he
posed a threat to their power and wealth. Jesus wanted to bring down their
entire religious system and was prepared to die in the process. Religion has
always had the capacity to be extremely toxic and spread war and hatred. It's
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not that religion itself does this, its just that as human beings we can use anything to perpetuate hatred. Those that have no religious faith can just as easily use ideology as a basis for death, seen across the world from Stalin in Russia to Pol Pot in Cambodia. But today Jesus wants to warn us specifically about religious people, not Markists. In the Gospel reading this week he warns us of those who come in his name seeking to deceive. 'Watch out' says Jesus, be on guard, most importantly be careful of those who speak pious words.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Violence, destruction, war and ridicule are common troubles that we all face in the world – perhaps even more so as we seek to follow Christ. The temptation is to respond in kind, offering violence for violence and using force to overcome force. However, the way of Christ, revealed through the Scriptures, is the way of peace, forgiveness, and faith in God's ultimate justice. This way is demonstrated by Hannah's prayers in the face of Peninnah's taunts (and in her song when she presents Samuel at the temple), in Daniel's prophecy of the shining resurrected ones, in the Psalmist's celebration of God's protection and guidance, and ultimately in Jesus' self-giving on the cross. It is interesting that, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus' warnings are associated with the disciples' awe at the temple building, which represented wealth and power (both of a spiritual and political nature, although Jesus revealed in his life and death that the latter seemed to have become more prominent). It is when we get absorbed in the trappings of power and wealth that we become violent and oppressive. In a time when children were wealth, Peninnah's mockery of Hannah was as much about power as it was about womanhood. Daniel's prophecy, likewise, reflects on the conflicts of power against power. The way of "powerless peace" that Jesus demonstrated, which brings us into right relationship with God, and enables us to support and encourage one another presents a stark contrast to these violent power plays.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: In a world in which war and violence are a constant reality, humanity desperately needs to learn two things. First, we need to relinquish our addiction to wealth and power, which inevitably creates both competition and oppression – winners and losers. Second, we need to embrace the Jesus way of "powerless peace", in which we trust in God's justice and love, even when the world seems to be descending into chaos and anarchy. The way of peace is not a "quick-fix" alternative to injustice. Nor is it an apathetic, inactive resignation which accepts reality without trying to change it. It is a painful, sacrificial journey that takes a long view of human

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history. When peacemaking rises up against violence and injustice, things often get worse, and oppressors and tyrants use greater violence and threats to try and silence the peace and justice making. But, when we remain steadfast in our faith that God is at work in our world, and that God's purposes of justice and peace will continue to overcome violence and oppression, we can absorb the pain, refuse to respond in kind, carry the cross, and ultimately wait until, as inevitably must happen, God's Commonwealth prevails.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Power plays and violence do not only happen on national and global scales through wars and revolutions. Every human community and family has its share of power plays and conflicts – some of which may turn violent. Often the most simple form of peace making is refusing to retaliate, refusing to hold a grudge and embracing the sacrificial way of forgiveness. Every person, and every community, has been hurt by someone else, or some other group. Our natural human inclination is to try and hurt them back, to even the score. But, the way of cross is the way of absorbing the violence and pain, and responding in love, forgiveness and acceptance. As hard as this is, it is the Kingdom view to which we are all called. Who needs us to choose this response today?

SERMON OUTLINE

"Covenant," Frederick Buechner

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-covenant>

SERMON

Jesus must have wondered what on earth to do with his stupid disciples. Here they are in Jerusalem in the Gospel passage today behaving like spell bound tourists as they gaze at the wonder of the Temple building. We can perhaps understand that simple folk would be overwhelmed by the majesty of the temple. It would have been the most magnificent building they had seen by far. The Temple was twice the size of Solomon's temple, construction had begun before Jesus was born and every year Jewish people from all over the world were still contributing towards the enhancements which were made. The exterior was covered in marble and gold to ensure that it gave the appearance of suitable place for God to inhabit.

However, Jesus needs his disciples to get beyond all of this. He has spent his time teaching them of the corruption and greed of the Jewish leaders and the system which they operated. Mark records that following the triumphal

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entrance into Jerusalem Jesus overturned the table of the money changers and those selling sacrificial offerings. Then he prophetically cursed the unfruitful fig tree which symbolised the temple. Such prophetic acts should have served to demonstrate the disgust which Jesus had for the Temple and all who supported the corruption of and exploitation of ordinary people. It was the religious authorities in Jerusalem who had promised to take Jesus' life and he knows that this is not time for a sightseeing tour. Not only is his death imminent but the very structures of Judaism and the temple itself are about to be destroyed.

The apocalyptic language which follows shows Jesus using words to paint a picture which describes the impending fall of Jerusalem and its temple. These words from Mark's Gospel have been described as a little apocalypse, in Revelation we see the full blown thing. They both use the genre of apocalyptic literature which was filled with mysterious signs, extravagant language, visions, cosmic events and descriptions of destruction. These are pictures and they truly say more than a thousand words.

Mark wrote at a time when these words would feel real to his listeners. The Roman Jewish War began in AD66 and there was war with Rome and tensions between the Jewish people themselves, such as the anger felt by the rebels towards priestly collaborators. Rome had problems itself with a political crisis involving several emperors in succession but in AD70 Vespasian's son Titus brought 60,000 soldiers who broke down the defences of the city and instigated an almost unimaginable bloodbath. Thousand were killed and the temple was burned down and eventually gradually sacked.

Jesus is giving to his disciples a warning that these things will come. Jesus has already predicted his passion and death and soon he will feel the cruel blows of those who, threatened by his teaching, want him silenced. They must not become beguiled by the opulence of the temple or imagine that it is anything less than the product of a corrupt system of exploitation. They must trust that destruction of all they hold dear will come and in spite of all that falls down around them they must continue to trust and believe that God is still in control.

There have been those who have seen in the words of Jesus messages about the end of the world. At different times in world history such people have opted out of society and taken themselves up mountains to look for the returning Jesus riding a cloud. However these words are not meant to be used like that. They are words of encouragement in a time of great distress and persecution for believers. Jesus tells them decisively 'Do Not Be Alarmed.' The message is one of hope, there is to be huge destruction but despite the temptation to believe God doesn't care, God does and he is with

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people. Appearances are deceptive, God can be trusted and believers should be encouraged and inspired.

The message for us is that we too in the face of whatever apocalypse we face, must continue to persevere, working with God to live in the way which Jesus showed. The words of Jesus teach us that we must not worry about or try to determine the "day and the hour" of his return. We trust that Christ will come and whenever that is it is for God to decide. In the meantime we do not throw down tools, rather we work to be Christ's living presence in the world.

Mark needed to convey to the church the fact that this was not unexpected, Jesus himself had warned that this would be the case, and so they should continue to trust. In our times we face our own trials and tests as we live out our Christian lives. Our commitment to Christ can cause us discomfort and even suffering. The gospel encourages Christians to remain strong and faithful during such times of duress and assures us that Jesus will be revealed as the real King and Lord of creation. Those who keep faith will come to a final vindication of all we trusted in – but did not yet see in our lifetimes. Meanwhile, the message that sustains us in our extravagant and poetic readings today is that Christ is faithful and will sustain us in times that test our faith.

As we approach Advent, the first coming of Jesus at Christmas, it is a time when we also remind ourselves that Jesus has promised that he will return. We too like those first Christians can face difficult times. We face all manner of real difficulties, we deal with losses and endings each day. We can all experience the loss of someone close to us, ill health can strike us down, a marriage might break up or we might lose a job. When such terrible times afflict us, then we all find them hard to face. Yet in times of testing Jesus gives his instruction to us that we must live without panic.

It reminds me of the poster produced by the Ministry of Information in 1939 at the beginning of the Second World War "Keep Calm and Carry On." It was intended to be distributed in order to strengthen morale in the event of a wartime disaster. The posters were designed to have a uniform device, be a design associated with the Ministry of Information, and have a unique and recognisable lettering, with a message from the King to his people. An icon of a "Tudor" crown was chosen to head the poster, rather than a photograph. The poster's popularity has been attributed to a "nostalgia for a certain British character, unshowily brave and just a little stiff, brewing tea as the bombs fall.

The message of Jesus today is watch out, do not be alarmed. We could in the words of the poster say 'Keep Calm and Trust Jesus'

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We are to be alert and watchful. We are to rely fully on God, and we are to live out the teaching of Jesus even as bombs, literal or figurative fall around us. We continue to care for our neighbours as ourselves, look after the widows, orphans, and those on the margins. as the world of Twitter and Social media brings events right into our own lives we go about God's business, refusing to panic. This is not a time for fear, Jesus bids us remain unafraid, and to confront the hatred, the suspicion, and the darkness of this present age. Now more than ever people need to hear the good news and need to find communities of faith where they are welcome.

These are not just the words of a motivational speaker. Jesus tells his followers that there is no need to worry, this is not because we need positive thinking, rather because he will be with us. We will encounter strife, but at such times Jesus calls us to trust and stand firm. Jesus calls us to have endurance and trust that he abides with us. When times of testing come, Jesus promises to give us the strength that we need. This is not a case of enduring through thick and thin and pushing ourselves along, this is a reminder that we are never alone. *Charles Royden*

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Proper 27B, 2015. Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown,

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/year-b-proper-28-33rd-sunday-in.html>

[Children's Sermon](#), Faith Formation Journeys

<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/childrens-sermon-for-pentecost-25-year.html>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](#), Ordinary 33, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[O Day Of God Draw Nigh](#)

[My Hope Is Built \(On Christ The Solid Rock\)](#)

[Come Ye Disconsolate](#)

[Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah](#)

[There's A Wideness In God's Mercy](#)

[My Deliverer](#)

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O God Our Help

Let There Be Peace On Earth

Lord, Make Us Instruments Of Your Peace

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title