



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 28 November 2021

First Sunday of Advent / Ratapu tuatahi o te taenga mai

Music to prepare us for worship “*How brightly beams the morning star*” Max Reger (1873-1916)

“*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming*” Flor Peeters (1903-86)

Welcome to worship

Music “*O sing ye a songe of Mary the maid*” Medieval text, music by Donald Byars (NZ composer)

Call to worship

(adapted from Luke 21:28)

Kia noho a Ihowā ki a koutou. May God be with you.

Ma Ihowā koe a manaaki. May God bless you.

Stand up and raise your heads!

Our redemption is drawing near!

Let us lift our hearts;

We lift them up to the Lord!

The days are surely coming

when all things shall be made new.

Hymn (*we will stand and sing while masked*)

(Veni Emmanuel) CH4 273 - translator: John Mason Neale

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

3 O come, thou Dayspring, come and
cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight:
[Refrain]

2 O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
in ancient times didst give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe: [Refrain]

Lighting the candle of hope

On this first Sunday of Advent, we remember God's gift of hope and that we are called to be people of God's hope.

God of hope and possibility, enable us to be people who shine the light of hope in your world through our words and by our actions. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

(During Lighting of Advent Candle we sing ... seated)

Light a candle bright and tall
 For the Hope within our world.
 Hope that heard the ages' call
 As the stars and planets whirled.
 Shine within our hearts today
 Come, O Hope, to us, we pray.

Prayer Kia inoi tatou – let us pray ...

Assurance of forgiveness

E te whanau a te Karaiti, family of Christ, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Passing the peace

Kia tau te rangimārie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Please stand and make a gesture of peace towards people around you.

Hymn *(Please remain seated)*

CH4 276 - Taizé Community

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.
 Wait for the Lord: keep watch, take heart.

Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church **Thanks be to God**

Gospel reading: Luke 21:25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already

near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Praise to Christ the Word

Anthem *"As a watchman waits for day- looks for light and looks again"* music Howard Shaw and Fran Walsh

Sermon "Fresh air and perspective"

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves."

It sounds like the writer might have experienced this. Maybe a volcano erupted and hot ash exploded into the sky and lava ran down to the sea and there was an earthquake followed by a tsunami and the sea roared and the waves rode up the beaches. People who had experienced a tsunami in the Solomons still shook in telling the story months later, of the sea washing up the beach into the church where people had gathered, carrying some worshippers away. Luke paints from inside the cataclysm, the crashing and unsettling, the once steady stars now unsteady, the once dependable sun now uncertain, the once shining moon now dark, the once solid earth now fluid, the once regular seasons now irregular. This is not a dispassionate meteorological seismic or astronomical account. Luke paints from inside the storm, whatever our storm is.

And he paints another, entering the storm, one who comes from beyond the horizon, who rides the clouds, who enters the darkness, who risks all the threats, who does not close his ears to the thunder or shut his eyes to the devastation or build a bunker to withstand danger or remove himself in any way from all the harm. This Jesus knows the storm from the inside, not avoiding or escaping or pretending or minimising. This Jesus enters into the sound and the colour and the drama and the scariness of the storm.

In Opononi there is a theatre that brings to life Maori creation stories. You sit there in contentment and safety while pictures play across a screen, and two people dramatise a story, including of the octopus emerging from under the rock, and then through those special effects some theatres now have, you feel the moist of the mist on your face and then you feel tentacles touching your ankles ... tentacles that are actually small threads playing under your seat ... you no longer feel safe and contented and you want to run, run, run ... Luke takes us there, with poetry that scares. Diana Butler Bass says that Advent slaps us with the uncertainty and violence of human history. From the beginning we're told there will be natural signs of turmoil and political distress. Chaos will hover over the earth, seemingly inescapable. Fear and dread will lead people to faint and some will feel as though the very foundations of heaven have been shaken by these world events.

We are in the storm. And on this first Sunday of Advent we are being prepared to receive a child of the storm, a child born in the storm, a child who will die in the storm. The Christmas story takes us straight into the storm. What posture do we take then, in the storm? "Stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." Not bunker down. Not find a rabbit hole. Not ignore or pretend. Stand up and raise your heads ...

When the chaos and gloom and doom feels thick all around us, we can stand up for "fresh air" and gain perspective. How do you do that? The former Prime Minister of Australia Paul Keating would listen to opera music before big interviews or budget presentations. He said it helped him clear his head. Amid the rush of Christmas, Knox and Holy Name and All Saints churches offer a week of daily prayer, taking time during the day to pause and sit quietly. Or perhaps you are displaying a nativity set or putting up a

Christmas tree or lighting a candle, and you take time to pause and pray. To enter into the eye of the storm, where calm is, where the centre is, where you are present to God as God is present to you.

Then Jesus turns us to a fig tree. We raise up our eyes from the chaos, and look at the fig tree, or whatever tree you notice. In our front lawn is a massive elm tree and living beside it we cannot but notice the seasons. Now it is lush with growth, soon I will be raking the leaves. Even in the chaos, there are things around us that are true and trustworthy.

Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to describe how we encounter bad events, and that with each season, a different stage of existence and experience affects us, as happens to the tree. The changes of the tree help us understand how time moves forward, building on growth through the seasons and storms of our lives, adding one ring to another. At every step of the way, we can trust that the kingdom of God is near. When we see the signs of things changing, Jesus says, even then we can know that the reign of God is close. Even if everything else we built our life upon, what gave our lives structure, even when our ideas of God pass away, the reign of God is close. And the chaos, the uncertainty, the threat, the fear is the raw material of hope – it feeds our longing for the ultimate, the eternal, the enduring, the dependable. We watch longingly for glimpses of good, of eternity breaking in.

Then, says, Jesus, as we have breathed fresh air and gained perspective, we can take account of the storm within, perhaps the biggest challenge of all ... to guard our hearts against the traps and ruts we easily get stuck in when we try to cope and survive on our own. We are to live God's freedom that stops us circling back to instinctive unhelpful reactions that stifle healthy relationships. Jesus wants to save us from ourselves. Be alert, praying for the strength to withstand these challenges so that, in the end, we *will* escape them ... to come to see that we are standing right now in front of or with the one who keeps setting us free, the Son of Man. Jesus is speaking of much more than the future. He is speaking of now.

Neal Plantinga has pointed out, being overwhelmed causes a number of different responses within ourselves and among us—especially as we wait for things to change. Some people succumb to sloth, others to cynicism, some try to control life, while others numb out the pain in whatever way they can. Jesus' words here in Luke 21 are an "antidote" to all of these. The one who is, who was, and who is to come *is* our redemption drawing near, the kingdom of God that is near already, and the Son of Man whom we stand before. We are not left to the chaos and our own devices. God has come and is present now, yet always on the move.

This is the Advent life. To *stand up* and *raise* our heads as chaos looms; redemption is near, in the form of the Son of Man being present with us in the chaos ... to *look* at the fig tree and take stock of what we know is true and trustworthy, the reign of God is near ... to be on *guard* and *alert* through prayer to withstand the traps of despair and fear as we live in the presence of God. This is the Advent life, waiting for the child who will be born in the storm, who comes to us in our storm.

Hymn (*Please stand*)

(Michael) Carol on Christmas 15 - Marnie Barrell

1 Come now where we least expect you,
Christ our hope and longing, come.
Show us where we still reject you
in the world you made your home.
Look around!
Christ is found
far beyond our sacred ground.

2 Come where we have tried to own you
locked within the distant past,
where your Church has scarcely known you,
where the least remain the last.
Enter still
where you will,
come to challenge and fulfil.

3 Christ-child, come in loving kindness;
come, great Judge whom angels praise!
Heal us of our pride and blindness,
purge our hearts and change our ways,
God's own Word,
love outpoured,
come to us, O Christ our Lord.

Prayer for others

The Lord's Prayer in English and Te Reo Maori

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.

Offering prayer *(please stand)*

Hymn *(we will stand and sing while masked)*

(Kingsfold) CH4 291 - Kathryn Galloway

1 When out of poverty is born
a dream that will not die,
and landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day,
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart.
Be blest: prepare the way!'

2 When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.

For only just and tender love
the hungry soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still:
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

3 When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of woman's faith
the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call,
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

Blessing

Music for our leaving *"Toccata on Veni Veni Emmanuel"* Andrew Carter (b. 1939)

The online worship resource is continuing. It is accessible on the Knox Church YouTube channel.

A whakatauki – **"Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri."** – "With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive."

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright

(minister@knoxchurch.net 0274675442)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

(jordan.redding@otago.ac.nz 0274285234)

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Peter Stockwell

Prayers for Others - Alisha Jefferis

In relation to your monetary offering, you may:

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318*
- *Give before the service, into the offering boxes at the back of the church*