



Preparation for Worship: Welcome to our world Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngevloBxwE>

Tears are falling, hearts are breaking
How we need to hear from God
You've been promised, we've been waiting
Welcome Holy Child

Hope that You don't mind our manger
How I wish we could have known
But long-awaited Holy Stranger
Make Yourself at home
Please make Yourself at home

Bring Your peace into our violence
Bid our hungry souls be filled
Word now breaking Heaven's silence

Hymn: StF 317 At the name of Jesus Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6AHbO29lpg&t=108s>

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow
Every tongue confess him King of Glory now:
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came,
Faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious, when from death he passed:

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures, to the central height,

Prayer

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again, With His Father's glory, with His angel train

Our Gospel reading for today, which we will have later in the service, describes the second coming of Jesus and begins with these words: 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.

Throughout the Bible, the waters of the sea are used as a metaphor for chaos and danger. To the ancient world the sea was unpredictable and dangerous. There were monsters living in its depths. The sea could suddenly rise up and overwhelm even the most experienced of sailors. It's no coincidence that at the very start of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is pictured hovering over the waters. Everything, it says, was empty and formless and dark. It's what God will transform into the fulness and order of his creation. Chaos and confusion are no match for God.

As we pray, give thanks for our God of creation. Give thanks for the wonderful order of this world For its fulness and diversity For its natural peace and calm.

Let us confess the ways that we, both as individuals and collectively, have brought confusion and chaos to the world. We have destroyed its peace. We have sought to impose our control and, in the process, have brought hurt to the world and hurt to one another. We have not heeded the maker's instructions and our lives are the worse for it.

Welcome to our world

Fragile finger sent to heal us
Tender brow prepared for thorn
Tiny heart whose blood will save us
Unto us is born

So wrap our injured flesh around You
Breathe our air and walk our sod
Rob our sins and make us holy
Perfect Son of God

Welcome to our world
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To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true:
Crown him as your captain in temptation's hour;
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
With His Father's glory, with His angel train;
For all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him King of glory now.

Creator God, we thank you that, in addition to the gift of this world, you have also given us the gift of Jesus. Through him you have brought the promise of salvation and the means by which our sins and the sins of the world might be forgiven. Through him you bring the means of restoration and transformation. We confess our sins before you and thank you that, in Jesus and his death for us, our sins are forgiven. Restore and transform us, we pray, as your sons and daughters, that through us your light may shine in the darkness. Use us to bring your peace and order into what for many feels like a turbulent and chaotic world.

And if that confusion and chaos feels like it has imbedded itself in our souls, help us to see your Spirit hovering over the darkness of our waters. Give us that peace and sense of order that only you can bring.
Amen.

Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil 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.'

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 does not 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.'

Hymn: StF 180 O Come, O Come Immanuel Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRYKV3PFBSw>

O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear:
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

O come, O come, O Lord of might
who to your tribes, on Sinai's height,
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe:

O come, O Rod of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;

from depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave:

O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery:

O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight:

Message:

Today is Advent Sunday which means that it's not very long before we hit Christmas Day once again. It hardly seems possible but then I think I say that every year.

What is Advent? It's that period when, traditionally, Christians have been asked to reflect upon the coming of Jesus and all that means for us. The word Advent comes from the Latin word meaning to come and it's not just the one coming of Jesus that we reflect upon but the threefold coming. Jesus who came as a baby born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. Jesus who is risen and ascended into Heaven and who comes to each one of us today through the Holy Spirit. And Jesus who will one day come again in glory. Jesus who comes in the past, present and future.

You may not have realised it but you had that sense of past, present and future in the words of our opening hymn, 'At the name of Jesus':

*Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came*

*In your hearts enthrone him; there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true*

*Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
With His Father's glory, with His angel train*

Both of our readings today look forward to the coming of Jesus. God, through Jeremiah, promised that he would send a ruler who would bring justice and righteousness to the world. It's a prophecy that looks forward to the first coming of Jesus but surely also looks beyond that to the time when Jesus will come again. Only then will that prophecy be completely fulfilled. And the reading from Luke again points us forward to that moment when the Son of Man will return with power and great glory. How we long for it to happen.

As we reflect upon these readings, I want to point to four simple things.

Firstly, I want to point you to the certainty of what is to come. The prediction of signs suggests this is something that in God's timing is already fixed. It won't be a random occurrence or something God does on the hoof. A few days ago, Ipswich Town recorded their first league win since returning to the Premier League. It's something that I, like a lot of people, have been predicting for a while. 'They're playing well', we said, 'It's only a matter of time before they win a game.' But I couldn't have told you exactly when that time would come nor, for that matter, absolutely 100% that it ever would. Even though I was 'pretty sure', it's not something upon which I would have bet everything I own. When it comes to the second coming of Jesus, there's no room for 'pretty sure it will happen'. The Bible makes clear this is absolutely 100% going to happen and something that I have 100% staked my life upon.

Secondly, I want to point you to the unmissableness of what is to come. Notice the contrast between the signs that were there when Jesus came the first time compared with when he will come again. First time around, the angels gave the shepherds a sign. Look for a baby laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. That's a sign very much hidden away. It's only a sign for those already in the know. It's hardly a golden halo hovering a few feet over the baby. There's a second sign. It's a star that appears to be so obscure that it's significance is only picked up by a handful of wise men. Second time round it will be altogether different. Jesus speaks of signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and of the powers of the heavens being shaken. I can't pretend that I know what that will look like but I don't need to. The point is that these are events that will be unmissable for anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. It won't be hidden and it will be universal. Ultimately, every knee will bow at the name of Jesus.

Thirdly, I want to point to the compassion and love in what is to come. That's not an angle we usually think about as we listen to accounts of the present world's demise. A more normal response would be fear and trembling. Yet Jesus tells us to stand up and raise our heads. Why? Because, he tells us, these things mean that our redemption is drawing near. God, finally, is vindicating his people. He is bringing a new order into being. From now on the world will be filled with his love and joy and peace and justice. There will be no more tears or sadness or sorrow. In today's reading, Jesus spoke of distress among the nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

In our prayers earlier we saw how, in the Bible, the sea is pictured metaphorically as a dangerous place of chaos and confusion. The story begins with the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters. How will the story end? Right at the end of the Bible, in Revelation 21, John sees "a new heaven and a new earth" for, he says, the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. That's not a throwaway comment about the sea. John is signposting the end of chaos and confusion and the permanent, ruling presence of our God of love. I'm not suggesting the end of the world is nigh but we are living through highly turbulent times full of chaos and confusion and how wonderful it would be to see God bringing that to an end.

Finally, I want to point you towards the response that Jesus asks of us. How does Jesus say that we should be living? Jesus urges us to be on guard so that our hearts are not 'weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life'. I had to look up the word 'dissipation'. It means the using up and squandering of the resources you have. I suppose, if you were asked to use the word in a sentence, you might say that the prodigal son dissipated the family inheritance that

had been given to him. Two popular phrases spring to mind at this point. One is 'Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die'. That's all about dissipation. Why hold on to resources when you can see no future? Might as well enjoy them now. The other popular phrase that springs to mind is "Don't worry. It's not the end of the world". That may be true but what Jesus says turns it on its head. Jesus is saying, 'When you can see that it is the end of the world, don't worry'. That's a different perspective entirely. Don't change anything he is saying. Hold on to the hope that has brought you to this point. Don't be paralysed by fear. Don't follow others in selfish indulgence. Instead, go on going on. Go on loving people; go on being light and salt for the world; go on living Godly lives and look forward to all that is to come.

Hymn: StF 405 Great is the darkness

Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP_BUHwweS4

Great is the darkness that covers the earth,
Oppression, injustice and pain.
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,
Though many have come in Your name.
Watching while sanity dies,
Touched by the madness and lies.

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.
Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.

May now Your church rise with power and love,
This glorious gospel proclaim.
In every nation salvation will come
To those who believe in Your name.
Help us bring light to this world
That we might speed Your return.

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Prayers

The prayers below are taken from the Methodist Worship Book. Please use the dotted sections to include those things that are on your hearts and minds.

Let us pray.

In joyful expectation of his coming to reign we pray to our Lord, saying,

Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your world as King of the nations.
We pray for . . .

Before you rulers will stand in silence.

Come, Lord Jesus. **ome, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your Church as Lord and Judge.
We pray for . . .

Help us to live in the light of your coming
and give us a longing to do your will.

Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.
Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.

Great celebrations on that final day
When out of the heavens You come.
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end,
And rulers will bow at Your throne.
Our great commission complete,
Then face to face we shall meet.

Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray.
Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.

Come to your people as Saviour and bearer of pain.
We pray for . . .

Enfold us all in your love and mercy, wipe away the tears of failure, fear and distress, and set us free to serve you for ever.

Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to us from heaven with power and great glory, and lift us up to meet you, where with all your saints and angels, we will live with you for ever.

Come, Lord Jesus. **Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hymn: StF 172 Hills of the North, rejoice

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYi6pKL4i5o&t=2s>

Hills of the north, rejoice,
River and mountain-spring,
Hark to the advent voice;
Valley and lowland, sing.
Christ comes in righteousness and love,
He brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas,
Sing to the listening earth;
Carry on every breeze
Hope of a world's new birth:
In Christ shall all be made anew;
His word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the east, arise!
He is your brightest morn;
Greet him with joyous eyes,

Let praise his path adorn:
Your seers have longed to know their Lord;
To you he comes, the final Word.

Shores of the utmost west,
Lands of the setting sun,
Welcome the heavenly guest
In whom the dawn has come:
He brings a never-ending light,
Who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on;
Songs be in every mouth!
Lo, from the north they come,
From east and west and south:
In Jesus all shall find their rest,
In him the universe be blest.

Postscript: O Come, O come Emmanuel (An alternative version by Simon Khorolskiy)

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60PtDuhBpJl>

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

O come, O Bright and Morning Star
And bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
And turn our darkness into light

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O King of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind
Bid all our sad divisions cease
And be Yourself our King of Peace

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel