



Being gathered

Reverend Judith Wigglesworth

Advent 2

10 December 2017

Isaiah 40:1-11

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

'Come Lord Jesus'. Come to us this day through your Word. Amen.

Last week we began our journey through the Advent season. We pondered what “being open” this Advent might look like. I suggested that we can open ourselves to God through intentionally being reflective and awake to how God might come to us in a fresh way. Advent is also an opportunity to be open with others – to wear our purple Advent every day and tell others what it means.

Today our theme is “Being gathered”. Our readings from Isaiah and the letter of Peter both look ahead to a time when the glory of the Lord will be revealed – the ‘second Advent’ we talked about last week. The time when earth and heaven will be made new; when every valley will be lifted, and uneven ground made level. And part of this is all about gathering. Isaiah says:

God will feed his flock like a shepherd he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep”. (Isaiah 40:11)

At this time, when it comes to pass, God will be the supreme gatherer of all, drawing together all of creation into God’s vision of wholeness and newness.

In our Gospel reading there is also a gatherer of people – John the Baptist, the forerunner and messenger who will prepare the way for Jesus. He appeared in the wilderness, and Mark tells us that “...everyone flocked to him from the

countryside of Judaea and the city of Jerusalem, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.”

The wilderness became a gathering place, an oasis, a meeting point for people thirsty for a new message of hope. Imagine the buzz of people flocking to see this curious figure, this voice, this prophet, who told Good News.

Advent is a season that calls us in to a story. Advent gathers us in to sit at the feet of the great story-tellers of scripture and to listen, gaze and wonder. That’s because Christmas doesn’t make full sense without the journey before it. Christmas doesn’t make sense without the foretelling of the ancient prophets, without entering into the deep hope for newness and release and freedom that was on the hearts of the people of Israel through their long history of journeying. We gather here each Sunday in Advent because we are entering into that story. We make a pilgrimage to the manger – the first Advent – while at the same time looking way beyond it to the second Advent - to the glory of a mysterious yet long-promised vision of wholeness.

And as we do that, we gather as the people of God to worship God, to give thanks, and to pray. In Bishop Ellie’s Advent letter she refers to a video about prayer that she and Bishop Justin recorded for the diocese. I invite you to watch this, as our Bishops invite us to enter into Advent in deep prayer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJaj7L0eJ4o&feature=youtu.be>

There is another way that today’s theme of gathering and thanksgiving beautifully fits our worship today. Today we gather with dear members of our parish family, Helen and Kevin Mosley and their family, to give thanks for the gift of Julia and Dilon’s baby daughter Kaylee.

Let us pray:

Creator God,

gather us in to you this Advent.

Gather us in thanksgiving,

gather us in love,

gather us in prayer.

Open our hearts, open our lips,

help us to pray

each hour, each day in Advent:

‘Come, Lord Jesus’. Amen.

