



St. Jude's Church
Stony Hill

Our Hope and Expectation

Readings for the First Sunday of Advent, Year C

Sunday 28 November The Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Him who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Monday 29 November Jeremiah 33:14-16

Tuesday 30 November Psalm 25:1-10

Wednesday 01 December 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Thursday 02 December Luke 21:25-36

Friday 03 December Luke 21:25-36

Saturday 04 December The Collect



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Our Hope and Expectation
Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2021

The First Sunday of Advent, Year C
28 November 2021

In Him is our Hope

The Collect: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reflection: The doors of the 2021 Advent and Christmas seasons open wide and beckon on this Advent Sunday. But, we are of mixed emotions. We cautiously approach the open doors, joyfully remembering the carols, the Advent Wreath, the tumult of emotions that attend our attendance and participation in the activities of the seasons, especially at Christmastime. But, deeply embedded in that joy is the resentment and subtle anger that we feel at having to adopt and adapt to a format of worship that constrains us to a remote, solitary and sometimes feelingless form of worship that will ever remain strange.

We struggle to make sense of all that is happening and has happened and often feel a sense of being lost and in the dark; of being unable to comprehend all that assails us in the name of COVID-19. We sometimes feel an inability to cope with the

cloistered and prescribed nature of our existence and are even tempted at times to feel angry with God and to query His love for us. "Where is God in all this madness and confusion?" we ask ourselves at those times when we are at our lowest. "How can I escape this?" we ponder. These are dark times in every sense...death, despair, and the utter darkness leave us downcast, but, there is HOPE!

Before COVID-19, we were merrily going about our business, complacent with the routines, scarcely taking the time to enjoy quality time in His presence and, in essence, taking everything for granted. Life happened and all was well; but was it really well? Life was busy but, for many, meaningless.

The pandemic has served to force us to ponder even more deliberately on who God really is, how He works, and, if we are sufficiently diligent to determine what He wants from us. God is love and in Him is our hope. So, this is not a time for despair. It is a time for discernment, a time to intentionally and deliberately draw closer to Him, to renew our hope in Him, to pause and think about all that we are, to find new meaning in the things we took for granted, to look for and weed out the darkness in our lives, and to share the hope that is in Christ, with those around us.

Meditation: What areas of darkness remain in your lives and in your relationship with God? What are you afraid to admit to Him? For this Advent season seek each day to weed out the dark spots in your life to make way for His love to shine more brightly through you.

Prayer: We pray to You our Father, for the strength to see that despite all that we may be experiencing, all is not lost, that there is real hope in You and that You remain mighty to save. **Amen.**

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Anglican Diocese of Jamaica and The Cayman Islands

28 November 2021



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Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2021*

**Monday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
29 November 2021**

Use me Lord to bring Hope

Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Scripture: "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." (Jeremiah 33:14)

Reflection: The first purple candle in the Advent wreath, the candle of Hope, was lit yesterday on Advent Sunday. If ever there was a time that we needed hope, it is now.

The pandemic is playing havoc with our lives. We have lost friends and loved ones to the disease, there is a steady trail of sadness and gloom, life in lockdown is cheerless, we no longer have full control of our movement, and we face constant frustrations every time our expectations for the end of this misery are dashed.

The pandemic has revealed an absence of love for our fellowman, that had been lurking dangerously under the surface veneer of an existence that we described as successful. Why would there be resistance on anyone's part, to protect the lives of the elderly and those with co-morbidities who are considered medically vulnerable? Why would we deliberately mislead others with lies and conspiracies about the vaccine that are hatched

from our warped and insecure minds? Why would we not take the necessary steps to protect ourselves? Where has love gone?

What does it take to unite us as a people and as a world, around the positive desire to want the best for each other and to be a part of creating that reality? It must infinitely take more energy to fight individual battles than to come together for a cause that takes mankind to a better place. What is that better place and what is our hope of achieving it? What role can we each play?

Our hope comes from the God we know and serve. He is our only hope. It may at this point look remote, but we know and are assured that nothing is impossible for God. We have within us the power to make the world a better place by our conscious decisions and actions, by our taking up our cross and following His call. We are the minds, hands and feet of the hope of a better future for mankind.

Meditation: It was Teresa of Avila who said: "Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours." How will you use your hands, your feet, your mind and body to bring His hope to the world?

Prayer: Use me Lord to achieve Your will for the good of mankind.

Amen.

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Tuesday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
30 November 2021

Why are you scared?

Reading: Psalm 25:1-10

Scripture: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul" (Psalm 25:1)

Reflection: The pandemic related events and eventualities have left us with much more personal time than we are finding comfortable to deal with. The lockdowns, curfews and the extra time force us to pause, and in the space and silence, with more time to think, we inevitably come face-to-face with life and who we really are. In the silence of self-discovery, are we happy with who we meet?

For some, the mirror reflects a life of pain, a life that is steeped in the gloom of weak and failing relationships, where there is sadness and for varying reasons, we can no longer tolerate to be in the same space with those around us. Life has become hell. We are in pain and scared, but we mask it well.

Yet, for others of us, the pain comes from being in the situation where for the first time, we have to confront long periods of being physically and emotionally alone. We are without the distractions and busyness that would normally hide our true selves, and in that silent solitude we see ourselves for who we really are, and it scares us.

For many, it is the sheer frustration of the uncertainty of the future that poses a monster like problem for us, as it appears we have lost control. We miss the hugs, the smiles, the expressions of endearment of our family and friends, and we wonder, "how much longer, Lord?"

The temptation is for us to engage in self destructive behaviours like denial, excessive drinking, binge eating, violence (to self and to others), we whine and complain, depression sets in, and we begin the veritable downward spiral of despair.

But, it does not have to be this way. Help is available! "How, and where?" you may ask. Our help comes from the Lord. "I am always with you" He says. But, in the noise of our daily lives and the tumult of our confusion we often cannot hear Him speaking to us.

Our ability to hear Him comes from knowing Christ, from establishing a deep and abiding relationship with Him, from talking with Him as frequently and as intimately as we would a confidant or a trusted friend. This deepened relationship often requires a realignment of our understanding of God and how He works. We search for that deeper relationship, sometimes using the same words of the Psalmist's plea "Make me to know your ways, teach me your paths, lead me in your truth, and teach me."

God knows our pain, our suffering, our confusion and bewilderment, and lovingly offers us the outstretched arm to provide comfort and solace and the space where we can find our true selves in and through Him. In Christ we find the strength to face and understand the new realities, more time to confront our fears and more time for introspection, more time to speak with God and to wait for His response.

Meditation: Regardless of how close we are to God, there is room for us to get closer. What practical steps will you adopt to ensure that you are drawn closer to Him over this Advent season?

Prayer: God of mercy, hope and love, we desperately want to be closer to You. Grant us we pray, the strength to see thee more

clearly, to love thee more dearly, and to follow thee more
nearly, day by day by day. **Amen**

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30 November 2021



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**Wednesday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
01 December 2021**

Happy New Year

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Scripture: "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith" (1 Thessalonians 3:10)

Reflection: Happy New Year greetings my sisters and brothers. I am sure that the recent turn of world events has caused us to contemplate and redefine our understanding of "happy" and to look in a more focused way on what makes us truly happy. We often confuse happiness with gratification and hence look to the wrong places for happiness.

The confusion between happiness and gratification has us chasing the material and it is only on occasions and times like these or when there is some major catastrophe in our lives that we are forced to look deep within. Then we discover that we are indeed in a rut, a spiritual rut in which by the passage of time we have grown comfortable. This happens because we tend to define ourselves by our possessions and what others think of us, instead of by the depth and strength of what is truly and uniquely us, our souls.

With progress, we have thrown out the ‘baby Jesus’ with the bathwater, we miss what makes life real, what speaks to our souls. Think of how long and hard many of us worked to purchase the brand name shoes and clothes and other expensive personal items only to find them now languishing in the closet or some place in our homes, for lack of use since 2020. These items are often purchased to satisfy our need to feel, look and live “like the Joneses”, or as reward for our hard work or sadly sometimes to make us appear better than those who cannot afford these luxuries. Do they now make us happy?

The happiness we seek - the happiness in our Creator - transcends space and time and possessions, it is deep within. There is the danger of believing happiness in Christ means being without pain and problems. Not so, but as we strengthen our hearts in holiness, we gain the strength to overcome the difficult times knowing that the difficulties are sometimes God pointing us in a different direction. Are we hearing His voice? What different direction is the pandemic experience telling us we need to take?

Meditation: Where and from whom does your happiness derive? How many of the material gods we worship will be reincarnated in our post pandemic reality?

Prayer: God of hope and love, we come before You at the start of this new year and ask that You open our eyes and hearts to the joys and happiness that can only come from a closer knowledge and awareness of Your love. **Amen.**

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01 December 2021



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Thursday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
02 December 2021

His grace is alive in us!

Reading: Luke 21:25-36

Scripture: "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place." (Luke 21:28 & 32)

Reflection: For so many, the pandemic is the surest sign that the world is coming to an end. And, if you are old enough you will remember that this is not the first time that various persons and groups have made such a declaration. Interestingly the evidence is becoming more glaring every day, that God remains in charge, and it is He and only He who will determine when the end shall be.

The real issue that should concern us, is not whether the end is now, but the extent of our readiness for His second coming, whenever that time shall be. In our desire to accurately predict the date of His return we lose sight of the fact of the practical reality that we are likely to die well ahead of any second coming. Are we ready?

Shall we be like the five foolish virgins and squander our time and thoughts on figuring out and worrying about the date, or shall we

keep our lamps trimmed and ready for whenever that day shall be?

We have a duty to prepare ourselves, to be ready, and we do so by living a life that Christ wants. We live not only for ourselves but also for our neighbours; we must be our brothers' keeper. And how do we do that? Being neighbourly has taken new dimensions in the context of the curfews and lockdowns that are now a part of the new landscape.

So being neighbourly could look like, finding the time each day to make a friendly telephone call to at least one person who you haven't seen or heard in a long time. The call need not be long, but it should be sincere in communicating your care and concern, your appreciation for their friendship and should reflect thanks for the blessings that we still enjoy, despite the pandemic.

Let us not fall prey to the temptation to complain about all that is not happening or has happened. The reality is that so much more is happening only that we need to take the time to see it, for then, the beauty of God's grace will come alive in us.

Meditation: God's grace is alive in us. What new activity will you embrace and share to show that His grace is alive in you?

Prayer: We pray to you Lord and thank You for life. Help us to look beyond the disappointments and see the opportunities for us to grow in Your love and grace. **Amen.**

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Friday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
03 December 2021

By their deeds

Reading: Luke 21:25-36

Scripture: "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." (Luke 21:29-30)

Reflection: We live in a time when the thinking is myopic, and we seek only the gratification of now, with nary a thought for the future and the legacy of our Christian stewardship. We live in a time when we think only of ourselves unmindful of the needs of those around us, or we pay token tribute to the assistance we offer others, using this assistance for bragging rights.

Jesus, in the parable, directed our attention to the fig tree and how we can use the leaves of the tree to identify the tree and its fruit. So too is it with our Christian conduct. Persons will identify us by how we live our lives. Are we Christ-like in our thinking and behaviour? Are we the same person at home as we are in public when all eyes are on us, and we need to create a good impression? Are our actions motivated by a genuine love for God and the need to help our fellowman or are they strategic and born of expedience?

A mother once shared with me that it was frightening for her to see her child (now a grown woman) and notice the extent of similarities in that child's behaviour and hers. There was an almost perfect match in some instances. What was most striking was that the behaviours were never directly taught to the child.

As she pondered the ways in which she had unknowingly impacted the child's life she also wondered about the spiritual dimensions of the impact of her behaviour on that child and on her other children. Do our children reflect the spiritual tutelage to which we had exposed them? Do our children's behaviour reflect the Christ-like conduct that we live on a daily basis?

As believers we have a role to play in making the world a gentler place. Will our lives and our conduct/fruits say that we are children of God? What will be your Christian influence for those around us and what will be our Christian legacy for those yet to come?

Meditation: How will you activate in your own life, the words of the little song we once sang in Sunday School: 'Lord I want to be a Christian in my heart'

Lord I want to be more loving in my heart

Lord I want to be more holy in my heart

Lord I want to be like Jesus in my heart

Prayer: God of all good, hear today the plea of Your child who so desperately wants to be like You. Let me not be ashamed to demonstrate my faith and grant me the strength and the courage to do so in any situation. **Amen.**

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03 December 2021



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Saturday of the First Week of Advent, Year C
04 December 2021

What are you prepared to do?

Further reflection on The Collect: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reflection: The child listening attentively to the reading of the Collect, asked his mother standing beside him, "Mom, what are works of darkness?"

As is often the case, it took a while for his mother to think through the best response to her enquiring 10-year-old son. She spent the rest of the service thinking about her answer and used the drive home to re-engage the young boy's curious mind. "You see son, darkness represents those situations where the light of God is missing" It represents those times when we are led by our ego and selfish desires and as a result, our behaviour is not pleasing to God. This can and does include things that we do and things that we fail to do. Either way, by our action or inaction we displease God who is the God of Light and life.

It is therefore important that we guard our thoughts, to ensure that they are pure and that they honour God, because our thoughts drive and direct our behaviour and our actions.

Her further thoughts moved to the sad modern day reality where much of what was considered works of darkness is now re-clothed and has been adopted as acceptable behaviour and described as “culture”. This is portrayed in the lyrics of the music we sing, the lack of sensitivity in dealing with images of the human body, the glorification of immorality and corruption, the disrespect and lack of care for the vulnerable, all of which are “in our faces” courtesy of the various forms of media.

These are indeed dark times when we consider that this behaviour is layered upon the plague of the pandemic which has served to expose the darker side of man and his inhumanity to his fellowman.

The Christian response requires that we not shirk our responsibility to bring new light into the dark spaces. It requires that we seek those opportunities and mechanisms to learn what He is asking us to do and find the ways in anchoring our faith in His words and works from which we draw the strength to intervene and overcome. Too often we look to others to fix what is wrong, without realising that we do have the power to assist, if only we were not blinded by fear. Why should you be afraid, He is with you always!

Meditation: For so long we have sat in frustration, complaining about the darkness in our society. What, by the grace of God, are you prepared to do, to get rid of the darkness in your own life and thereafter in the situations you meet in the daily course of life?

Prayer: God of light and wholeness, we pray that You may use us to shed Your light in the dark places around us. This we truly pray, **Amen.**