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ADVENT 1

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Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace  
[www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org](http://www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org)

# ADVENT 1

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



GOD's appearance is so intense that it is like a consuming fire that burns everything in its path. If we are so impure, how can we be saved? Only by GOD's mercy. The Israelites had experienced GOD's appearance at Mount Sinai<sup>1</sup>. When GOD met with Moses there was a thunderstorm, smoke, and an earthquake. If GOD were to meet us today, His glory would overwhelm us, especially when we look at our "filthy rags".

Sin makes us unclean so that we cannot approach GOD any more than a beggar in rotten rags could dine at the King's table. Our best efforts are still infected with sin. Our only hope, therefore, is faith in JESUS CHRIST, who

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 19: 16-19

can cleanse us and bring us into GOD's presence. This passage can be easily misunderstood. It doesn't mean that GOD will reject us if we come to Him in faith, nor that He despises our efforts to please Him. It means that if we come to Him demanding acceptance on the basis of our "good" conduct, GOD will point out that our righteousness is nothing compared to His infinite righteousness. This message is primarily for the unrepentant person, NOT the true follower of GOD.

Our psalm is a prayer for revival and restoration after experiencing destruction. GOD is our only hope for salvation.

Cherubim are mighty angels. That GOD is "enthroned between the cherubim" is a reminder of his presence on the ark of the covenant law.

Three times the writer of the psalm calls on GOD to "restore us". Before restoration must come repentance or turning away from sin. Repentance involves humbling ourselves, and turning to GOD to receive His forgiveness. As we turn to GOD, He helps us see

ourselves – including our sin – more clearly. Then, as we see our sin, we must repeat the process of repentance. Only then can we constantly be restored to fellowship with GOD.

Corinth was a giant cultural melting pot with a great diversity of wealth, religions, and moral standards. It has a reputation for being fiercely independent and as decadent as any city in the world. The Romans had destroyed Corinth in 146BC after a rebellion. But in 46BC, the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar rebuilt it because of its strategic seaport. By AD50, the city had become very prosperous, but this made it ripe for all sorts of corruption. Idolatry flourished, and there were more than a dozen pagan temples employing at least a thousand prostitutes.

Whenever we receive a personal invitation, it makes us feel good, it strokes our ego by making us feel wanted and welcome. We are called to be GOD's holy people. GOD personally invites us to be citizens of his eternal kingdom. But JESUS CHRIST, GOD's Son, is the only

one who can bring us into this glorious kingdom because He is the only one who removes our sins. Being SANCTIFIED means that we are chosen or set apart by JESUS for His service. We accept GOD's invitation by accepting His Son, JESUS CHRIST, and by trusting in the work He did on the cross to forgive our sins.

By including the words, "to all those everywhere who call on the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," Paul is making it clear that this is not a private letter. Although it deals with specific issues facing the Church in Corinth, all believers can learn from it. The Corinthian Church included a great cross-section of believers – wealthy merchants, common labourers, former temple prostitutes, and middle-class families. Because of this great diversity of people and backgrounds, Paul takes great pains to stress the need for both spiritual unity and CHRIST-like character.

Grace is GOD's free gift of salvation given to us in CHRIST. Receiving it brings peace – ^as we are told in Romans 5:1 **Therefore, since we are justified by faith,**

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In a world of noise, confusion, and relentless pressures, people long for peace. Many people give up the search, thinking it impossible to find – but true peace of heart and mind is available to us through faith in JESUS.

Paul thanked GOD for the Corinthian believers. I have spoken much this year about the option of keeping a gratitude journal – a way of giving thanks to GOD every day. ^We can never say thank you enough. When thanksgiving becomes an integral part of our lives, we will find that our attitude towards life will change. We will become more positive, gracious, loving and humble.

The members of the Corinthian Church had all the spiritual gifts they needed to live the Christian life, to witness for CHRIST, and to stand against the paganism and immorality of Corinth. But instead of using what GOD had given them, they argued over which gifts were more important.

Before tackling their problems, Paul described his hope for the Corinthians. He guaranteed these believers that GOD

would consider them “blameless” when CHRIST returns. This guarantee was not because of their great gifts or their shining performance – but because of what JESUS accomplished for them through His death and resurrection. ALL who believe in the LORD JESUS will be considered blameless when JESUS returns. Today’s struggles, difficulties, and failures don’t tell the whole story. We need to keep the big picture in mind. If you have faith in CHRIST, even if it is weak, you ARE and WILL be saved.

This year has seen many families separated from each other due the pandemic and due to distance. I came across this video on social media and it illustrates well the frustrations through which people have been going. COVID lockdown experiences have been hard – waiting for the time when the simple things in life can happen again – waiting for someone special to come.

We all know what it means to wait – especially when that waiting is filled with anticipation – like when we wait for guests to arrive, or when family and friends come to celebrate a birthday or Christmas. Often, we find ourselves

so excited we just can't even sit down. We keep looking out the window to see the first signs of their arrival – their car turning into the driveway.

While the primary focus of Advent is to prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate Christmas, there are really 2 distinct parts to the season. During the first 2 weeks of Advent the Scripture readings are intended to help us reflect not on the first coming of JESUS but on His second coming at the end of time. JESUS reminds us a number of times in the Gospels that it is not possible to know the times of our individual ends or the end of the world. The prophets of the Old Testament, and especially Isaiah, have told us about His coming. GOD had promised that the Messiah would come. People have waited and looked forward to this coming of the Messiah for hundreds of years. But we know He has come – so our Advent waiting has an assurance that increases our excitement and anticipation. When we first hear this, it might sound scary, yet GOD's decision to withhold this information from us is actually a gift. It is



GOD's way of reminding us that what is most important is how we live today. In today's Gospel, JESUS is clear: "Be on your guard! Stay awake!" When I was in the cubs as a child, our motto was BE PREPARED! It doesn't mean just sitting around on our hands and doing nothing while we wait. Rather, we are being reminded that there's no time like the present to be good disciples. Once JESUS comes again – whenever that might be – we wouldn't want Him to catch us "napping", or worse, behaving in ways unlike CHRIST. JESUS asks us to imagine a servant awaiting his master's arrival from a journey. The servant doesn't know exactly what time of day or what day the master will return – so the servant must be ready at all times to greet the master when he does.



[Sr Kym Harris, a Benedictine nun] has reflected upon our Gospel passage for today by saying:

JESUS uses a number of vigorous verbs in this Gospel to describe the behaviour He wants to see in us as we

await His coming – we are to be ALERT, and AWAKE! These are well applied to our ordinary existence. Yes, the daily round that doesn't seem important in the eyes of the world is precious in the eyes of GOD as it is in daily life that the kingdom of GOD is unfolding for us. We do not drift into this kingdom or find ourselves within it by default. GOD wants to actively and effectively participate in making His kingdom a reality in our world. It takes great daily courage to take these words to heart but when we do, our lives, our often very humble lives, attain a meaning and depth that cannot come from human sources. Judgement will be made, not upon what presentation we may be able to drum up at the last minute, but rather on what we do day-by-day – when no one is around. When we trust the plan that GOD has for our lives, the grace of the Spirit opens our eyes to infinite vistas in the confined spaces of our daily lives.



May we pray:

Ever-loving GOD, your chosen people were a people of great hope and you did not disappoint them as they waited for your salvation. Grant to us, who await the glorious return of Your Son, glad and joyful hearts. This we pray through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

Daily Prayer 2020

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