

Worshippers' Weekly

November 17th 2024
Issue #1

Scripture, Reflection, Church news and up-to-date info

17th November 2024

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Second before Advent

The Second Sunday
before Advent.

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This week

St Barnabas - Eucharist
9:30 am

Holy Trinity - Eucharist
11 am

Bible Study (St Barnabas)
Wednesday
10 am

Worship on Wednesday
Holy Trinity (WOW)
7 pm



Collect

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life: grant that we, having this hope, may purify ourselves even as he is pure; that when he shall appear in power and great glory we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament - Daniel 12:1-3

At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Epistle - Hebrews 10:11-14,19-25

Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The Gospel - Mark 13:1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Reflection - Revd Matt Sanderson

Do not be alarmed. Do not fear. Do not be afraid. This sentiment is consistently repeated throughout the Bible. There are commentators who say that this sentiment is repeated 366 times—one for each day of the year. I'll be honest, I haven't had enough time to count them all, but we definitely hear this from Jesus in our Gospel reading today.

Now, when you think about all the awful things that happened in this great book, it's a strange sentiment indeed—not to worry about things to come. And here Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple. The temple was the center of the world for the Jewish nation at that time, and it must have been truly magnificent.

When I was about 14, I went to Jerusalem and visited the Wailing Wall. The Wailing Wall is about all that's left after the destruction of the temple. It's about 20 meters high, and this part was merely a retaining wall—part of the foundation of what must have been a truly awe-inspiring building.

Jesus goes on to describe not only the destruction of the temple but also earthquakes, wars, famines, and false prophets. And yet, He says, "Do not be afraid."

So, what does Jesus mean when He says, "Do not be alarmed" or "Do not be afraid"? At that time, the temple stood as the center of the Jewish world. To talk of its destruction would have been absolutely devastating.

I, for one, am concerned about the world we're living in today. I'm failing as a preacher if I don't give my comments about what is going on in this time.

I'm alarmed about the rise of right-wing politics in the world. I'm alarmed about the rise of dictatorial rule. I'm alarmed about the increased use of military power and its impact on everyone. I'm alarmed about how often the truth is not spoken, but diluted and changed. I'm alarmed about algorithms that manipulate our perceptions through social media. I'm alarmed that the truth-tellers of our time are belittled and condemned.

My God, I am alarmed.

But today's Gospel reading tells me not to be alarmed... It tells me to take stock of my feelings and redirect myself to the promises that God so often delivers.

You see, all of God's prophets were hated and dismissed. So, if that's the place you're in, you're in good company. Jesus tells us that these are the beginning of birth pains.

Father Paul took my grandmother's funeral some time ago, and although I can't remember his words verbatim, he discussed the plight of a child being born into this world. A lifeform that has to descend through the birth canal into the unknown. A baby, quite content in a warm environment, is squeezed and pushed out of comfort into a cold, noisy world. It's no wonder they come out crying.

Such is life, and such is death. Many fear death just as that baby fears being born. We are unknowing of what the next step holds, what lies beyond. Nobody, except one, has come back and made a documentary about it. You can't find out about it on YouTube, Instagram, or Facebook. It's the fear, the alarming reality of life and death.

What do I draw from today's Gospel?

All this stuff is going to happen. We will always have wars. We will always have the poor. Jesus tells us this. We will always have injustice until Jesus comes again. We can work against it, and indeed we should. But stop... Do not be alarmed... Do not be afraid... God has it all in hand. These are the birthing pains of His plan.

There is a caution that comes with these recent revivals or outpourings of the Spirit. It is said to come like a wave. I could make some links with the waves of contractions here, but let's not make it too graphic. Quite literally, however, along with all the great stuff, the debris is brought to the surface. Much like a wave, being a minister in the midst of all this isn't always easy. Often, the untruths are brought to the surface, the debris, the skeletons, to be dealt with.

And we all have them. Not one of us is without sin. Remember that before we pour out condemnation. But here we have signs and revelations of what is about to come: the Kingdom of God is at hand. We have been given the time to iron out our flaws, to discern our sin, to put ourselves right with God, to repent, and make ourselves right with our Creator before judgment arrives.

We have been given a glimpse of what happens after death. No, we've been promised what happens after. Much more than the knowledge of an unborn baby

descending that path into this world, we have been given the promise of life eternal.

As we approach Advent, we are reminded that this is a time to prepare ourselves for the arrival of the God-child. We can take that reminder from today's Gospel too: there is a new thing coming. Yes, we are going to see a lot of bad stuff happening, but set your focus on God.

Set your focus on His promises. Discern His will, and we are one step closer to that Kingdom of God Jesus promises.

Notices

21/11/24 @ 7pm: **Licencing Service** @ St Peter's Church, OL7 0BA
15/12/24 @ 6pm: **Annual Carol Service** @ St Barnabas
18/12/24 @ 7pm: **Annual Carol Service** @ Holy Trinity
24/12/24 @ 4pm: **Christingle Service** @ Holy Trinity
@ 11.30pm: **Midnight Mass** @ Holy Trinity
25/12/24 @ 9.30am: **Christmas Service** @ St Barnabas

Useful Contacts

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