

The Significance of Advent Sunday

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[0 : 00] Thank you for all those delightful misstatements. I am happy to be here, and we'll begin by saying so.

And I should like to make it plain right at the outset that today, in a way that isn't usually the case, I am speaking to order. I am a man under authority, you see, in a certain respect.

Learner's exchange, as we all know from our experience, is a buzz, and every buzz has its queen bee.

And we have our queen bee, and Alexandra said to me, we don't hear enough about the church's year. Will you talk to us on Advent Sunday about Advent?

And as you may or may not have discovered, when Alexandra puts a question like that, and looks at you in the meaningful way that she does, you say yes.

[1 : 19] So, here am I, speaking on Advent, as I was asked to do, and doing so, or aiming to do so, in a way which will introduce us all to the church's year, in case we hadn't thought about the church's year recently, or perhaps even been reared in Amelia, where the church's year wasn't a matter of thought and discussion at all.

And there are sections, of course, of the Christian church of which that's true. So, let's begin, as we should begin, with prayer.

Father, we ask for your wisdom and your help as we think together about the meaning of Advent.

We thank you now for the Savior who came to this world at Christmas, and who was foretold prior to his coming for the first time, and is promised to come again at the time of your appointment.

May all that I say and all that we think be to his honor and glory. In his name we pray. Amen.

And now, let me begin by saying some general things about the church's year, and move on, once I've established that frame of reference, to say the little bit that I have to say about Advent itself.

[3 : 26] But first, the very basic question, what is the church's year? And the answer is, it's a pattern of worship and teaching, which goes back at least to the 6th century, and may go back further.

It's a pattern which is observed, one way or another, by all three sections of the historic church, as it's divided, unhappily, as it has divided, over the years.

You know, perhaps, that in the 11th century, until the 11th century, there was one fellowship of all the congregations of Christendom, the one holy Catholic church, as it called itself.

And in the 11th century, there was a split between the congregations in the West, who spoke Latin, and the congregations in the East, who spoke Greek.

without going into the reason for the schism, which is actually pretty disreputable when you come to look at it, one simply says, well, that was the basic division.

[5 : 09] And then, in the 16th century, there was a further division between the churches of the Reformation as a group, and the Roman Catholic church unreformed, in the way in which the Protestant churches had begged that it would be reformed.

And Anglicanism is one of that group of 16th century churches who broke away from the Roman Catholic church, church as we call it, well, as it calls itself.

And all of us, I imagine, in this group have come through the, well, if not the Anglican version of the Reformation division, then some version of the Reformation division.

I'm not going to test the meeting, it doesn't really matter. I'm simply going to assume that most, if not all of us, have that as our background and are starting their thinking about the church's year from that particular bit of the heritage.

heritage. Now, having said that, I affirm the Eastern Church, that's the Orthodox Church, and the Western Church, as it's called, that is both the Roman Catholic Communion and the Protestant,

most of the Protestant bodies, certainly the 16th century ones, the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the Anglican, to specify the three basic divisions, they have all observed the church's year in some form, and now is the time to describe it in more detail.

[7 : 30] it is an annual reality, as its very name declares. It has two fixed dates, around which all its other dates, year by year, are established.

The two fixed dates are December 25th, that's Christmas Day, and Epiphany, that's January the 6th, 12 days after Christmas, then within the frame of a calendar year starting a little before Christmas, and finishing a little before Christmas next year, you have the following.

Advent, this is where it all starts. It doesn't all start on the same day. The Eastern Orthodox churches start Advent halfway through November.

The Western churches, Catholic and Protestant, start Advent on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, which is where we are today.

This is Advent Sunday. After those four Sundays, because I'm speaking as a Western Christian, and I'm talking henceforth entirely in terms of the Western heritage, after those four Sundays, and then Christmas Day, following during the week, the next week, comes, as I said, 12 days to Epiphany.

[9 : 34] You say, what is Epiphany? Well, Epiphania is a Greek word that means the appearing or the display or the manifesting, and the English name for Epiphany, which you find in the prayer book, is the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, and it's a day on which is celebrated the fact that three wise men from the East came to worship baby Jesus, and they are thought of as representing the whole non-Jewish world.

in other words, they are thought of as the emblem of the character of Christian faith as a missionary religion which seeks to embrace the whole of mankind.

Then comes the series of weeks that work up to Easter, and Easter comes at the end of what is called Holy Week, Palm Sunday, and then Good Friday, and then Easter Sunday, and Easter has always been regarded in the church as the really crucial day without which nothing else in the pattern of God's redeeming action would have the significance, the power, and the momentous change agency, if I can call it that, that Easter does.

following Easter, Acts chapter 1 verse 3 tells us that there were 40 days during which Jesus appeared in his risen life and power to instruct his disciples further, further I mean than he'd been able to do before his passion, to instruct them further in the realities of the kingdom of God.

And the church year picks up that figure and counts 40 days from Easter and then celebrates Ascension Day, always on a Thursday, a Thursday of the sixth week following Easter Sunday.

[12 : 35] And the significance of Ascension Day in the church's year is far more actually than most Protestant Christians acknowledge.

We tend in fact to ignore Ascension Day simply because it happens on a Thursday. And so very rarely do any of us get to church on Ascension Day.

But in fact, Ascension Day celebrates the entry of the risen Lord Jesus to his kingdom in the full sense.

That is, it celebrates this reality in terms of the New Testament picture of Jesus taking the throne at the Father's right hand.

God. You've got that phrase in the church, in the creed I should say, I wonder if we've ever thought about it. The image goes back to at least the Persian kingdom, five or six centuries before Christ, when the monarch was regarded as too grand altogether to deal with the daily administration of his kingdom.

[14 : 04] So he had a person called the Grand Vizier to do all that for him. The Grand Vizier corresponded in the ancient Persian kingdom to the vice-chancellor in a modern university.

same pattern, you see. The chancellor of a modern university is a person who already is distinguished and thus has his hands full of things that his distinction requires him to concentrate on.

So he can't do the daily administering of the university. Therefore, that's left to the vice-chancellor. See the idea?

Well, that's where the imagery of sitting at the father's right hand comes from. It's the place of privilege, the place of highest authority next to the monarch.

And Ascension Day celebrates Jesus' entry into his kingdom in the fullest sense that he takes that position. And that's how we are to think of him now, as the one to whom the father has entrusted, the total management for the present of the kingdom of God.

[15 : 30] In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that when this history of which we are part has come to an end, then the son will render the kingdom up to or back into the hands of the father, saying, in effect, the work of the kingdom is done.

Well, at the moment, the work of the kingdom is not done, and we are to think of the Lord Jesus as reigning cosmically, reigning providentially, reigning omnipotently, on his father's behalf, throughout the cosmos, and certainly in the world, or over the world, of human life.

And then within that, Jesus is building his kingdom in the fullest sense, that is, the sense in which it implies the wholehearted response to Jesus on the part of those who are his.

Well, I can't go further into that, though I would like to. The Ascension Day points to all of that, and as you can see, it's really important for Christians to be clear about it in their own mind.

But the church's year isn't finished, so I must move on. Ten days after Ascension Day comes Pentecost. In the early Christian centuries, Easter and Pentecost were regarded as the most momentous of the key days of Christian observance, and that reflects the fact that in those early centuries the Holy Spirit was acknowledged and honoured and celebrated in a way that, alas, isn't yet matched by the actions of the church today.

[17 : 59] Although it's true to say that ever since the Reformation, the church in the West at least, and I think it's true to say the whole Christian church, including now the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox, has been in process of recovering an appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit, so that century by century more and more of it has been appreciated and in this 21st century the heritage of Christian thinking since the Reformation about the Holy Spirit has pretty much matched the teaching about the Holy Spirit first to last throughout the New Testament.

Well, again, that's something that I would like to talk about in detail, but can't because time doesn't allow. I'm simply saying that's the way it was when in the early days of the church's year, and that's how it's come to be again in our time, and I, for one, am very thankful to God that that is so.

And for the Western Church, that's the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches, let me say it again, there is one further date, and that's Trinity Sunday, which is celebrated the week after Pentecost, and confronts us with one of the enormous ironies of a Christianity that's out of sorts.

What I mean by that is the clergyman after clergyman will say if you ask him, or nowadays I suppose one has to say her as well, Trinity Sunday is the most difficult Sunday of the year on which to preach.

The Trinity is a mystery and I don't know what to say. And I want to reply to that by saying, good Lord, the whole story from the reality of God as a team, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who all act together.

[20 : 50] It would take you several sermons to explain that. From the time when the team went into action, redemptive action, for the saving of sinners, in fulfilment of the Father's plan for the saving of sinners, well, that would take you months to explain.

To explain, that is, in terms of the team job which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing together. Oh, yes, sermons are preached by the dozen, which focus on the work of one of the three, but sermons are not so often preached in terms of the team job which the three are doing together. And yet, in the New Testament, it's very apparent that the holy three always work together, together, and none of them works separately from the other two, and it's extremely illuminating to go through the whole story of the outworking of God's plan of redemption, filling in all the links that show how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were together in this divine action, followed by that divine action, followed by the next divine action, and so on, and so on, and on Trinity Sunday, you can dive into any of that, and you will have enough material, not simply to talk for 20 minutes, but to talk for 20 weeks, 20 sermons, which is just about what the church's year requires you to do, because after

Trinity Sunday come something like 20 weeks, a little over usually, leading up to the beginning of the next church year, and for some reason, which I can't explain, those 20 odd weeks are called ordinary time, and the understanding is that during those weeks, the clergy, at their discretion, are to teach the whole of the work of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, acting together to renew, transform, and fulfill human life.

The problem for the Christian preacher is that there's always too much to say, and sermon by sermon, you have to make decisions as to what you're going to leave out.

[24 : 02] But a clergy person who plans the whole of ordinary time for a particular year, will find that there's no shortage of material, and that still he or she has plenty left to talk about next church year, when we've got those 20 odd weeks of ordinary time to deal with, to, well, yes, to deal with, I can say it that way, yet again.

that's a description, a rather sloppy description, I fear, of the church year.

And before we go any further, I would like to ask, have I been clear so far? Any questions of fact that anybody needs to ask about the shape of the church year?

Yeah, yeah, that's interesting because I looked at the Holy Rosary cathedrals, that they use the ordinary time, they will say Trinity, and I looked, I compared to the Roman Catholic calendar, to the Anglican, I think it starts that ordinary time in the Catholic church starts right at the first Sunday after Trinity or something like that, when ordinary time starts in the Catholic church.

Yes, well, actually, that's when ordinary time starts for us Anglicans. There are detailed differences about how the church year is kept at various points, but essentially we're all together on all of this, we in the West, rather than being in contrast with each other.

[26 : 03] Let me move on. Please, I just wanted to check that I had you all with me before I raise the next question, which is, what's the importance of the church's year?

What's its value? Do you miss anything of significance if you don't bother about it? Well, the formula answer that I give to that question is, we are called, we, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, to learn and live the faith of the New Testament, that is, the faith of the whole Bible, in which the key or keys to understanding the Old Testament are provided by the keys are provided by the New Testament, so that the Bible is, in fact, a unity.

To learn and live the Christian faith, that's the Christian calling. The faith, of course, is the faith as revealed in Scripture.

Now, wait a minute, if you ask most Christians if, in a nutshell, they will tell you the Christian faith, it's dollars to donuts that most of them will talk about the gospel message of personal salvation.

They will give an account, in other words, of the Christian faith, which is self-focused. they will say, this is the gospel, but actually they'll express it, indeed, they'll make a point of expressing it as the grace of God that saves individual sinners, like me, like you, so on.

[28 : 13] And the end of the story, as we tell the story, is that you and I, who have faith in the Lord Jesus, crucified, risen, glorified, and ministering to us now through the Holy Spirit from his throne, the end of the story is going to be that we will be with Jesus, glorified with him in heaven, and there's nothing better beyond that that one can wish for, because there is nothing better beyond that period.

God the Creator has ordered it so. Well, all right, and that testimony-angled way of explaining what the gospel is is something which in many contexts is just the right pattern for the conversation that you're engaged in, because saying it that way, you are able to engage with your conversation partner and ask them in a meaningful way whether they are Christians, whether they believe all this, whether they take it to heart, whether they have put faith in the Lord Jesus, who is the central figure of this story, and we're used to that.

It's part of our evangelical heritage, and we should be thankful for it, and we should be thankful that in our day there were lots of folk in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Eastern Orthodox Church who would be happy to agree with us that there are times when the Christian faith should be witnessed too, expressed and enforced in that way.

But yet, in the Bible itself, the whole faith, the whole program of divine action that brings salvation to sinners is actually expressed in a God-centered way rather than an individual-centered way, and a Christ-centered way as distinct from the sinner-centered way.

In other words, the New Testament in particular is looking and moving all the time towards a declaration of the team job, which the church here is concerned with, the team job in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together for the salvation of sinners, for the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

[31 : 27] Yes, there will be glory for the Lord's people in heaven, but the glory will be focused on the Savior. and the fulfillment, the deepest level of fulfillment for the saints in heaven will be praise and adoration of the Lord Jesus specifically as the central focus of the team.

Again, that's something that I would like to spend time demonstrating, and I can't do it because the clock is beating me, as it usually does. But if our learning and living of the faith is to match the way it's presented in the New Testament, well, this is something we must appreciate.

The Father's concern when he planned it all was that in the work of salvation, the Son should have all the glory, and in the life of heaven for the redeemed, the Son should continue to have all the glory.

And that's the Father's will, and that explains why the Lord Jesus really is the central figure in so much of the New Testament, and supremely, and they say, in the book of Revelation, Revelation, which from many standpoints is the book that gets us, how can I say, closer to a perspective on heaven than any other book.

This is therefore something that we must pick up and run with. If we're going to be fully biblical Christians, this is the perspective which revelation, I mean, God's revelation in the New Testament requires of us.

[33 : 37] This is the central perspective which our relation to the Lord Jesus as his disciples requires of us, obedience and gratitude and praise and adoration to our Lord Jesus is eternally to be the centre of everything for every one of us.

Now, out of the presentation of the Christian faith which the church here gives us, that truth emerges naturally as the conclusion of the whole matter.

but, as I said, very often when Christians are asked to state the Christian faith, they state it in a man-centred, human-centred, individual-person-centred way which doesn't actually celebrate the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Father and the Spirit with him as it should.

I'm being dogmatic when I say that, yes, I know I am, and because the clock is beating me, as I said, I'm not going to ask you whether you have any questions about that.

I just hope that all of you can take that point as the crystallizing of much that you've known, or at least half known, or three-quarters known, over the years, and you can take it, you can digest it, you can celebrate it, and you can adjust your own thoughts about your own devotions in terms of it without need for extensive discussion.

[35 : 41] I hope so. Anyway, I'm going to assume that, and move straight into the illustration which I want to use to describe all of this process that I've been speaking of.

The illustration is of furnishing a room. The room is your mind, and mine, with our memory, that's part of our intellectual equipment.

The mind, with the memory, is the room to be furnished. Now, how does one furnish a room? Well, right from the start, one has in mind the thought, it must look good as a whole when it's finished.

Everything must fit in to what will impress the person who come into the room as a single harmonious pattern. Beyond that, it depends what sort of a room it is.

I mean, if it's a room for meals, well, it will have a meal table at its center, and everything else will be arranged around that.

[37 : 02] And if it's a study, well, it will have a desk in a fairly prominent place, and everything will be arranged around that. But the first concern will be to make sure that, yes, it's going to look good, it's going to look harmonious in itself, it's going to look right in, how can say, right in line with the use that's going to be made of it.

that's how one decorates the room. All right. How does the analogy work?

Well, I want to think that our minds, yours and mine, rooms for decoration, as I picture them, will have in them, all the items that express the faith, and all the items which are drawn on, one way or another, in the worship and service of God.

The creed will be there, and the church's year will be there, just as the Bible will be there, and specific doctrines of the catechism will be there.

That's the illustration which I would ask you to, how can I say it, to file in your minds, and bring out for inspection on a regular basis, and use as, how can I say it, a check, when you ask yourself, well, no, is my Christian life, at the intellectual level, properly proportioned and balanced, or is it incomplete and lopsided?

[39 : 21] And I think that that is a question for all of us disciples of Christ to live with. love. And I think that every scripture that exhorts us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it's expressed in 2 Timothy 3 verse 18, is calling us really to that kind of mental activity.

Now here I will pause. Do you recognize this, brothers and sisters, as wisdom for keeping our Christian identity in shape?

Can you see that the church is here deployed as furniture for the Christian mind, point by point, event by event?

is the God-given pattern, or the God-given resource, shall I say, for furnishing the mind, the Christian mind, properly?

We, yes, you understand that that's what I'm saying. Perhaps you're thinking it over. I hope you are. Because for most of us this is a new thought.

[40 : 48] isn't it? I think so. And I'm building on that as I talk about Advent, just as every teacher who refers to any part of the Christian, any of the key items in the Christian year should have the whole thing in mind, to shape what he or she says, teaches, focuses on, at each particular point.

Now, to Advent. To Advent. The Latin word *Adventus*, from which comes our English *Advent*, is a word that means approach, coming, or presence.

Adventus, and that's what the season of Advent is about. And it's unique because there are two Advents to be thought about and celebrated as each Advent we must seek to do, we should seek to do.

there is the first coming of the Lord Jesus, which is past, and there's his second coming, which is future.

In the days when Karl Barth was overthrowing a great deal of German liberal theology, back in the 1920s, he and his colleagues in this excellent project, they founded a magazine of which the best thing, I'll tell you now, was the title.

[42 : 47] The title in English was *Between the Times*. *Zwischen den Zeitung*, I think, is the German way of expressing that.

And *Between the Times*, of course, is a translation. you can see what's meant straight away. The *Times* are the Lord's first coming and the Lord's second coming.

Yes, that's where we are, and that's the very first thing that the very first element in the Church's year reminds us of. We live between the two comings, and we are called to look back to the first one, and forward to the second, and to check the life that we're living in terms of the fact that that's how it's placed, how our life is placed in the plan of God.

In the New Testament, the first coming of Christ, now, this is just a simple scheme that you can memorize and meditate on, the first coming of Christ, brought into the world light, that is, the light of truth about God, life, that's the reality that Christians enter into through faith in Christ, and union with Christ Christ, by the Spirit, and that's the beginning of eternity, in fact, for all of us.

This is the life that will go on through the transition out of this world to the next, which we call death. Yes, we do die into life, and that's a good phrase to remember.

[44 : 48] When we leave this world, we die into more of the life that God gives, then we have known hitherto. You die into life.

And not only did the first coming bring light and life, it also brought into the world the reality of love of a kind that the world had never seen or thought of before.

Love that leads to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for sinners who deserve rejection, who do not deserve to be loved, but who nonetheless are being loved at a tremendous cost in order to bring them through the light into the life and make new creatures out of them.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

How good it is that that's perhaps the best known verse of the Bible, for it's all there as you can see. Well, that's what came into the world through the first coming of Christ.

[46 : 16] light, life, and love. A new existence for all of us. At the second coming, well, scripture tells us plainly, Christ will reappear and his reappearing won't be like the first appearing at Bethlehem, born of Mary, a very unspectacular first appearing, shall I say, though his appearing will be sudden, visible to everyone on the face of the globe at the same moment, physical, every eye will see him in his glorified humanity, it will be sudden, and it will be triumphant.

I could quote you scripture, I've got the scriptures actually in the margin of my notes, for each of those qualities, which will mark the second coming, let me simply say this about it, the best we can do to forefancy it, as 19th century preachers used to say, we don't use the word *forefancy* today, they did, the best we can do to forefancy the second coming, is to think that in a single moment,

suddenly, without warning, our whole environment, as we know it now, which means at the present moment, of course, this room in which I'm speaking, and you're listening, and this company, that is all of us together, it's a group of friends who regularly meet for this study, on Sunday mornings, all of that will pass away, suddenly, not gradually, in a moment it will be gone, and you and I, as individuals, each of us, will find ourselves, somehow, confronted, in a personal way, by the person of the Lord

Jesus, who is there to judge us. If you ask how such a thing can be, when the world has had its millions of inhabitants, over, well, more than 2,000 years now, the only answer one could give is to say, well, God the Creator can make himself, and does make himself, personally present with, and personally focused on, each single one of his people, that's two, what is two billion, at the present time, on the face of the earth, and it's been like that, ever since Christianity began, he can make himself, and he does make himself, personally present, to each single

Christian person, on the face of the earth, at any one time, not to mention, all those Christian persons, who are in preliminary glory, with him already, he is God, he can do that, and the Lord Jesus is God, and he too, can do it, and does it, and he will do it, visibly, when his moment comes, for the second, his, for his second appearing, on the face of the earth, and it's staggering, I know, even to say it, gives one the feeling, aren't you talking nonsense, no brothers and sisters, I'm not talking nonsense, I'm talking biblical theology, and in that moment, of the second coming, we shall each of us find ourselves personally confronted, by the

Lord Jesus, our judge. I won't take the imagining of it any further, I will simply say, if your faith is a biblical faith, a faith according to the creed, a faith according to the catechism, a faith according to the 39 articles, well, you will know, you will realize, that's how it must be.

[51 : 49] And what lies beyond that, what more there is, not simply to be imagined, but to be entered into when the time comes, is more than in any case we are able to envisage at this time.

but that's how the moment of the second advent will be, so I urge, for everyone on the face of the earth.

And when we talk about it, witnessing to our faith, that, I believe, is what we should be saying, rather than some of the wild things that are said about such matters as the rapture, the rapture is, in my estimate, it's very unhelpful nonsense.

It isn't what the scripture teaches, and if you believe it, you disqualify yourself from believing what the scripture does teach. The Lord is coming back, and he will deal with the whole human race together in the same moment.

moment. And that's all that I propose to say about the second coming at this time.

[53 : 12] What I have to say now about the church's year is that the historic pattern of advent in which the two comings of Christ are celebrated is a summons year by year to think, and imagine, and focus, on the two comings, in the way that I've just described, and to praise the Lord Jesus here and now as our present savior, for the knowledge that when he stands before us as our judge, you know, when we stand before him for our judgment, he will be the savior whom we trust right now for the forgiveness of all our sins through the cross, and the inheritance of glory, which, so scripture says, he is going to share with us when he comes again to take us to himself.

and, yes, just one more thing I would like to say briefly before I close, and then we can discuss things, as I'm sure we need to do.

This understanding of the significance of Advent is, I believe, what Cranmer had in mind, when he put together his initial version of our Anglican prayer book.

And for the four Sundays of Advent, he provided four prayers, four prayers for the welfare of the church, four prayers with different but complementary emphases, four prayers whose emphases we should take to heart, and, I think, memorize.

I don't know whether you use the collects for daily prayer, but if you do, of course, memorizing becomes that much easier. The four collects focus on four themes, which, between them, constitute the readiness, the readiness of heart and mind, the readiness of hope, as well as the readiness given by assurance of present salvation, which is the Christian state of mind that Advent should bring on in spades, if I may say so, every December, every Advent season in the calendar year.

[56 : 26] What are those themes? Well, the collect for the first Sunday in Advent focuses on a purpose. Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put on us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy 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.

That's the purpose, so to live here and now, that our title to glory remains sure, and our hope for the second coming of Jesus includes our own glorification.

The collect for the second Sunday of Advent focuses on Christian patience, fed, supported, sustained by the scriptures.

Bless Lord, who has called all holy scripture to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such ways hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and encouragement of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Patience means staying with it, keeping on, keeping on, refusing to be discouraged, refusing to be thrown off the track of your personal faith.

[58 : 14] That's how we are to live as the Lord's servants as long as life in this world lasts.

Patience, keeping going through the ministry to us of the scriptures.

The third Sunday in Advent is a collect for preparedness. Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may so prepare and make ready thy way by turning the hearts of the disobedience to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, we the worldwide fellowship of believers.

But we may live so as to be prepared, packed up and ready to go every day of our lives and living in hope and in the joy of hope as each day passes.

and the fourth Sunday in Advent is celebrated with a collect that has to do with power, the power of God active in the human community.

Raise up, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power, and come among us and with great might succor us, that whereas through our sins and wickedness we're sore let and hindered in running the race that's set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.

[59 : 59] In other words, Lord, revive your work in each of our hearts and in every church and throughout the world, wherever Christian people meet.

people just Harm wie ■ persist by through all this issue ,