

And we thank you too, Lord, for the holiday tweenies and the creche that goes on. And we just pray, Lord, that you will bless all these activities that we are involved in for our young people, Lord.

We ask your blessing over each one of them. So, Lord, be with us now. Go before us throughout this day. Keep us safe in it and help us to have our eyes towards you as our Lord and as our God.

As we ask all with forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. But before some of the young ones go out to the holiday tweenies and those who are staying in, just a wee word to you.

The last few weeks we've been thinking about Advent and what it means. And at the holiday club last week, the young people were making their Advent calendars. And I don't know if you've been working your way through it.

[6 : 19] But day by day, if you've got an Advent calendar, it might not be the one you had at this holiday club. Maybe you've got your own at home. What you do is, as we heard from Alistair Macaulay when he was here as well, you open up the wee doors and you find out what's inside it.

Now, hands up if you've been doing it one day at a time. You've been doing it one day at a time.

Yeah, a few hands going up. Hands up if you're just someone who just, I'm just going to pop them all off.

I'll just have them all at once. One day and it's all done. Hands up if that's the way you do an Advent calendar. Not hands going up. That's good. Because that would spoil it, wouldn't it? It takes the fun away from the excitement of each day you're counting down towards Christmas one day at a time.

And then you open it up and you see what's in it. This had a mixture of little gifts or little sweets. And you use that or you eat that. And other Advent calendars are full of chocolate.

And you're counting down the day to Christmas Day when you get the last one. But also in the holiday club, we had this little book that we were working in. Join the Adventure, as it was called.

[7 : 23] So every day of the Advent calendar, there was also a few questions that went with it. So I hope as well as eating the chocolate or looking at what's inside, you look at what the questions say. And inside each part of the Advent calendar, there was a verse or a scripture reference.

And today, the 22nd, the scripture reference was, A Saviour has been born. And it's great for us to come together today and remember that.

We remember that every week. But we remind ourselves today, as we're going on into Christmas week, remind ourselves each day a Saviour has been born. And one of the questions says is, it's speaking about the angels who came and appeared to the shepherds and said there's good news of great joy.

A Saviour is born. It says, who did the angels say the good news was for? Who was the good news for? Was it just certain people? Was it just them?

No. It was for the whole world. And not just them, but every day of the year. And all the years of this world, that is the good news that this world hears.

[8 : 33] A Saviour is born. Now an Advent calendar, it doesn't last very long, does it? It's only maybe a few days. The ones we made were 12 days.

The ones maybe you get for December, you have 25 days counting down to Christmas. But there's other calendars that maybe aren't as exciting. Here's a calendar from our house. It's not as exciting, is it?

You can't pop open anything to get a chocolate. And it lasts all the years, starting from January last, at the beginning of this year, right through we're into December now. It's not very exciting.

It's got little things written on it. There it's telling me what day the bins go out. Not very exciting. It's at other parts of the calendar, so maybe there's a dentist appointment or a doctor's appointment.

Sometimes it'll be marked days of going back to school or being off school, days of particular things happening throughout the year. And it's just the ordinary day-to-day things.

[9 : 31] Maybe it doesn't seem as exciting as an Advent calendar. But if we see what's exciting about the Advent calendar, not the chocolates or the little treats you get, but a reminder that a Saviour is born.

And if we see that in Advent, counting down to Christmas, then we enjoy every day of the year. It doesn't seem as exciting putting out the bins, but even that can be exciting if we're trusting Jesus. Everything we do can be exciting when we're trusting Jesus. Whatever we're doing is exciting when we know that God sent a Saviour to this world. And when we trust in Him, we look to Him, we believe in Him, then we rejoice every day of the year, no matter what is going on.

So may we remember today and in all the days ahead, a Saviour who is born, who is Christ the Lord. He has come that we might have life in Him and enjoy life to the full.

So may you enjoy this week in the holiday times, but may you enjoy every day as we, God willing, go into a new year as we start a new calendar with all the ordinary things that are going on.

[10:44] May we rejoice in the Lord who is good to us. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise now in Psalm 46a.

Sing Psalm's version, Psalm 46a. And this is from verse 7 down to verse 11. Psalm 46a, page 60 of the psalm books, a tune is Evan.

We're going to sing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm. And these, the two verses at the beginning and the end that remind us of that great promise of God that the Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

[11:55] For Jacob's God, our strong defense and fortress, will remain. So we're going to sing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm. We stand to sing to God's praise.

Amen. For Jacob's God, our strong defense, and fortress will remain.

Come, see the words the Lord has done, the judgments He commands, the desolations He has brought, to pass in many lands.

In every land throughout the earth, in the midst of all great seas, He shatters, The Lord's cross and spirit and shield and brings its great peace.

Be still and know that I am God on earth exalted high.

[13:59] And all the nations of the world, my name will glorify.

The Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

For Jacob's God has strong defense and fortress will remain.

Amen. I'm reading at verse 13, reading into chapter 5, down to verse 11.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

[15:39] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

Now, concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman.

[16:39] And they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day.

We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then, let us not sleep as others do. But let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night.

And those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love. And for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him.

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. Amen. And may the Lord bless that reading from his word.

[17:40] We'll again just engage in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we do thank you for your word. And we thank you for the reminder in these readings that we have had from chapter 4 and into chapter 5 that both end with that word to encourage one another.

And we thank you that we can do so, basing that on the foundation of your truth, the word of God, which is the foundation for life and for all that we do, and for all that lies ahead of us, Lord, for all eternity.

Your word of truth is there to guide us and direct us into the paths of life and into the ways of salvation. And we thank you for the great reminders that your word gives to us.

As we think of the verse that we were sharing with the children, that to you is born this day in the city of David a saviour who is Christ the Lord. We thank you that there is a saviour who has come, that we have had that first advent where he came into this world to save his people.

And we were reminded through his names that he was given Emmanuel, which means God with us. We are thankful for that promise that remains to this day. The promise that we have sung about in Psalm 46, as well, that the Lord Almighty is with us to strengthen and sustain.

[19 : 04] We thank you that there is that promise for each day of our lives. And we pray, Lord, that through faith you might bring us to lean upon you and to trust in you and the one who you have given for our salvation.

And we do pray, Lord, that we would know what it is to have your light upon us. We know the world has so much darkness in it. There is so much evil, so much sin, so much going on around us, Lord, that leaves the world in so much pain and anxiety and fear.

We see it day by day, O Lord, when we think of all the different things that are going on, whether it's natural disasters or war or just individual situations that we see where grief and sorrow comes in.

And each and every day we hear of something new. And, Lord, we know that in this world we will have troubles, that the Lord Jesus himself reminded us of that.

But we thank you that there is hope in him, that as he came into this world, as he was born as a man, as he lived in this world among the people, as he saw their great needs, as he saw their sorrows and sadness, he was able to say that they could be of good courage and we could be of good courage because he has overcome the world.

[20 : 24] And we thank you that his life led him to that place where not just he lived for his people and among his people, but that he died for his people, that he gave his life as a ransom for many.

And as we are read in these words before us today, we are reminded of another Advent, another time when the Lord will return, that he will come to take his people to himself.

And may we see that message today in the midst of everything else that's going on as well, as we think of counting down to Christmas Day and so much that takes our attention just now.

May we remind ourselves and be reminded through your word and by your spirit, there is another great day of the Lord to come, a day that we do not know when it will be, and yet a day that we are instructed and guided to be ready for.

And so we pray, Lord, for your spirit to help us to that end, to help us to know that our lives, which seem to maybe have such a distance ahead for us, that we are so indebted to you for the life that you give, but we are so aware too, Lord, of how quickly circumstances can change.

[21 : 38] And so we pray today, Lord, that you will help us by your spirit, by your grace, to know your love towards us, to know your warnings towards us, and to know your grace that is able to save.

So may you bless us and keep us and watch over us, watch over all who are so busy at this time, traveling to and fro. We know that so many plans have been disrupted with the weather over these last few days.

Many people will be longing to maybe get away to family or come home to family. We pray for safety and help to all who are in that position. We pray for safety and help to those who are involved in all the aspects of traveling, whether it's by plane or boat or train or car.

Whatever it might be, Lord, we thank you for all who look after us and look out for us in that way.

We pray your blessing on all who are involved in all of these things for safety in the midst of it all.

We do pray, Lord, for these days ahead, for your peace and protection over us as so many families come to enjoy a time together. May we remember the joy of family and friendship and encouragement to one another in that.

[22 : 52] But may we give praise and thanks to you above all, for you're the giver of every good and perfect gift. And so we pray, Lord, that your spirit will be in the midst of all that we do.

Remember those who are maybe lonely at this time, those who have maybe no family or friends around them, those who feel very isolated, for those whom this time of year is a difficult and even a painful time of year, especially those who maybe come to a first Christmas without loved ones.

We know, Lord, that there are all these times when grief and sorrow comes, maybe in an overwhelming way. But we pray, Lord, for your comfort and for your blessing to be in the midst of it. Thankful for those who we have read of that are assured that to be absent from the body is to be home with the Lord, that there is that hope, that we do not grieve without hope, for there is hope in Christ.

And so we pray, Lord, for your comfort and for your grace towards us. Pray for those who are unwell, for those who are struggling with ill health in homes or hospitals or at their own homes, for those who are concerned for loved ones, for those whose hearts are heavy just now, Lord, maybe with great burdens of loved ones upon them.

We thank you that we are able to cast our cares upon you. That prayer is such a wonderful gift in the midst of these times. And maybe when we feel we cannot pray, we thank you for those who pray for us and with us.

[24 : 18] And so, Lord, we pray that you would bless us and keep us and make your face to shine upon us and upon your world, upon all the nations at this time, that we would bring peace in the midst of all the troubles that we see surrounding us.

Guide us, then, we pray. Be with us in this day. May we rejoice in your goodness as we worship you, as we fellowship with one another this morning and also this evening too. And in the service, be with Kenny I as he leads it and in our fellowship in the evening as well.

May you be pleased to bless us in the midst of all that we do and to rejoice in your goodness to us in the hope of the gospel and the salvation that is in Christ. Hear our prayers and continue with us now as all we ask.

We ask the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. We're going to worship God by singing to his praise again in Psalm 20 in the Scottish Psalter, page 224.

Psalm 20. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6. The tune is St. Andrew. Psalm 20 at verse 1, page 224.

[25 : 34] We'll sing from verse 1 to 6.

To God's praise we stand to sing. Amen. Amen. Let the singing, O let him have sent from above, and on his sanctuary.

From Zion is the holy hill, let him give strength to lead.

Let him remember all my gifts, accept thy sacrifice, and may thy hearts wish and fulfill thy thoughts and counsel wise.

In thy salvation we will join, in our God's name we will.

[28 : 00] This may our banners and the Lord, thy prayers all fulfill.

The Lord, thy God, his kingdom say, he from his holy hand, will hear him with the saving strength, by his own right can give.

Amen. Well, you can turn back with me to a reading, in particular in chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5. We're going to look at this section, verse 1 to verse 11, although it begins really at verse 13 of chapter 4, but there's two separate sides to what the Thessalonians are looking for, or asking for from Paul here.

In verse 13 to the end of chapter 4, they're asking, what's the coming of the Lord going to be like? Paul speaks about the sound of the trumpet, how he's going to come in this way.

[29 : 35] He's not going to forget his people at all. He's going to come for them. But then in the second part, we're looking at this morning in chapter 5, it's more when is it going to be?

When is it going to take place? Advent is the season that we've been hearing about so much just now. Advent is a countdown, but today we're thinking of Advent with a twist, if you like.

We've been thinking very much about the Advent of the first coming of Christ. This time of year, when that's what's being remembered by so many people around the world, that God sent his Son into this world, that a Savior would be born into this world, that that was a countdown to remembering that God has sent his Son.

But Advent is all about counting down. Counting down to an event, to something. And it's something that we're often doing. All of us are doing it.

Maybe every day of the year, we're counting down to something. We're counting down to maybe when holidays will come. I'm sure many teachers and pupils are counting down the days till the Christmas holidays would come, and they've arrived.

[30 : 47] And there's a sense of relief in that, a sense of joy, a time to relax, and to enjoy a time of holiday. Work, closing down for this period of Christmas and into the new year, it's a sense of counting down towards that, and that time comes, and you're able to relax a bit more.

And all throughout the year, there's a sense of counting down to different things that might be going on in our lives, counting down to birthdays, counting down to weddings, just counting down to different times and events in our life.

And if we're counting down, it means that we're looking forward to something. The Advent calendars that we've been thinking about, they're counting down to Christmas Day, and when we remember that God sent His Son.

So we're counting down to a particular thing. We're counting down to the holidays. We're counting down to that last day when we come out of school or the workplace for a time and enjoy a time of holiday.

We're looking forward to something. Advent is about counting down to a particular situation. Well, another Advent situation is what we have here in 1 Thessalonians.

[32 : 04] And as I say, particularly the end of chapter 4 and into chapter 5 here, we have an Advent of something else that is going to happen. Not looking to the coming of the Lord in the first place where God sent His Son into the world.

That has happened. But we're looking to another Advent, to another time when the Lord will return. The day of the Lord as the heading is there in your ESV Bible of chapter 5.

The day when the Lord will return. And the church at Thessalonica was like, it was an early church. It was a church that was young in the faith and therefore it had many questions.

Many things that they'd maybe known or learned before that were very different now to the gospel that they were hearing. The good news of Jesus and the salvation that He brought.

So there was a very different teaching that they were hearing. And you see it especially there in chapter 4 when it's speaking about those who have already passed away. Their understanding before this would maybe, well, that's it.

[33 : 08] They're gone. They're forgotten about. But Paul says, no, they're not forgotten about. They've gone, but they will come. Again, they will return. The Lord will return and take them to Himself.

And so there's this wonder of the gospel that God not just sent His Son into this world, but they sent them with a purpose to save His people. And that this salvation is not just for this life, but it's for eternity.

And that He is going to come again. And this then leads into the second question that they have. And that is the question, well, if this is to be so, when?

When will it be? Can we count down the days until this will happen? When we think of Advent counting down, it's with a particular day in mind.

We have a particular number of days we're counting down towards. But is that something that we can have in this situation, the coming of the Lord? That's the question that they have.

[34 : 14] When will this be? Is it a question you have today? In the midst of everything, all the preparation for Christmas just now and coming together as families, all being well on Christmas Day and enjoying this season of holiday, is the question you have, when will the Lord come again?

Or is that just pushed to the back of your minds? How often do you ask the question, or do you ever ask the question, I wonder, when will the Lord come again?

Or even maybe the question is, will he come again? So many people have that kind of attitude where they think, well, we're seeing the world in so much chaos, so much pain, so much grief and heartache for so many people.

Surely if the Lord was going to come, he would have come by now, but he would write all of these things. And so the coming of the Lord is dismissed as it will not happen. As we think of counting down the days, these days towards Christmas, as we think of counting down towards the coming of the Lord, may we see that we are to remember not just that he has come, but that he will come again.

And this is not to take the joy out of Christmas, because the more we understand that he came in the first place as a saviour for the world, and the more that we understand that he will come again, the more we are able to rejoice in the praise that he has come to remember us, and that he will come to take us to himself.

[35 : 54] To enjoy Christmas is not to have everything ready for this Wednesday, but it's to have everything ready for each day of life, living in light of the fact that the Lord will return.

It's not about one day, but every day. And so there's three things in this passage I want us to be aware of at this time. Three things that Paul answers in light of the questions that they have. And he puts it in this way, the first thing is to be aware of the seasons. He speaks there in verse 1 of, now concerning the times of the seasons, brothers. So he wants them to be aware of the seasons.

The second thing is to be aware of the situation. In verse 4 he says, but you are not in darkness. To be aware of the situation. And then the third thing is to be aware of the solution.

In verse 8 he says, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

[37 : 01] So there is to be aware of the seasons, to be aware of the situation and to be aware of the solution. And so the first thing we want to see is to be aware of the seasons.

The people in Thessalonica they had questions. Questions are quite natural for every one of us to have. We all have questions of different things. And when it comes to questions about faith, when it comes to questions about eternity, we're so often looking for answers, but where are we going to find the answers?

Well the people in Thessalonica they had already been taught different things, but now they're hearing a new teaching about Christ who has come. And they want to know more. And so they bring their questions to Paul.

They bring their questions to him in the hope that he will be able to answer the questions that they have. And there are some questions as you see as you read through Paul's letters, not just this one, that he answers many of the questions that people have about faith.

People still have to this day about faith and what it means. But there's one question that almost just seems unanswerable. They're trying to pinpoint something here.

[38 : 15] The end of chapter 4 they've heard what the day of the Lord's return is going to be like. It's going to be amazing in so many different ways. But now they've got this question when?

When will this be? When will God return? Now why would they be asking this question? Well surely it would help them to prepare for his return if they knew when he was coming.

If we're looking ahead to something, if we're preparing for something, whatever it might be, whether it's Christmas or holidays or weddings, whatever it might be, if we've got a date in mind, we're able to work towards that date.

We're able to make preparations in light of the moment of time and how much time we have left to prepare. So they're saying to Paul here, wouldn't it help us to know when Jesus is going to come again?

So therefore we will be able to prepare ourselves in the right manner for his coming, his second coming, his second advent. Think to yourself just now, what difference would it make if you knew what day the Lord was coming again for the second time?

[39 : 29] What would you do differently in your life if you knew, for example, that he was coming two years today? What would you change? What would you alter in your life?

Would you think, no, I don't have to change anything, I'm quite happy the way things are, I'll be ready when he comes? If you're a Christian, you would hopefully have that hope. You would say, well, I know I am ready for his coming.

But if not, if you had said, well, two years today is going to come, how would that change your life? Would you think, well, I've got more time to do my own things now because I know exactly when he's coming.

I'll spend maybe 18 months just doing what I want to do, fulfilling my own desires, and then maybe the last six months, then I'll start getting ready for the Lord's return.

then I'll start making things right in that sense. Is that the way you would live if you knew a date when he was coming? It's certainly not the way you should live.

[40 : 30] Because even if we were told and we knew and we don't, we had two years till he came. The reality is we might not have two years.

We might not have two weeks, two days, two hours, because we don't know what will happen in our lives. And so it would be foolish to live in a sense of Advent, counting down with that mindset.

That would be wrong. And so what Paul says here is he answers the question about well when is this going to be? He says now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you, for you yourselves are fully aware.

You already know the answer he's saying here. And so do many of you, I'm sure you know the answer to this question. When will the Lord come? Well, we realize it's not a date.

It's not a day that we can count down towards. He says for you yourself are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

[41 : 37] It's going to come suddenly. The reason that he's not able to answer it is the same reason that it's never been able to be answered. In the Old Testament, even in the teaching of Christ in the New Testament, it's not a day that can be pinpointed with a date and a time and a year.

It's a day that's described in this way suddenly, like a thief in the night when you least expect it.

That's the way it's described. You go back to Joel in the Old Testament, and especially chapter 2, and you read through that chapter, and it's talking about this day of the Lord's return.

It's amazing the kind of picture it gives of the way it's going to be. It's going to be an awesome day, an amazing day, a terrifying day, a day where the people of God can rejoice in.

happen. But it's going to happen suddenly and quickly. That's the point that Joel makes very clear in the Old Testament. Jesus himself was asked this question.

You think, well, surely Jesus had the answer. Well, you read in Mark 13, verse 32, but concerning that day, the day of the Lord's second coming, the day of his second advent, or that hour, no one knows, he says, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the father.

[42 : 59] And so he says, be on your guard, keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come. He says the same in the gospel of Luke, chapter 12, verse 40, you also must be ready for the son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

We don't know when it's going to be, but we are to live in light of what the scripture tells us, and what the scripture tells us is to be ready, to be aware of the seasons, he might come like a thief in the night.

December the 7th, 1941, was a day, the day when a devastating attack happened in Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii. A day started like an ordinary day, a sense of peace, but a day that ended in complete devastation for so many, 2,300 people, or nearly that number lost their lives that day.

And yet just a few months earlier in September, someone had said, a Japanese attack on Hawaii is regarded as the most unlikely thing in the world, with one chance in a million of being successful. But what happened? Devastation came. Are we living in a prepared state or a state of denial where there's false comfort?

[44 : 24] there's two ways you could look at that text which says the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. You can live like that thought well a thief in the night.

Not every house is bargained. It won't happen to me. And so you live in denial, it's no concern. But that's not the way to live.

The way to live is to think the Lord will come. Without focus on that, the Lord will come. He will come to you, he will come to me, he will come to us all.

The Lord will come. Just like he did in the first time when God sent his son into this world and people didn't expect him, didn't receive him, didn't look at him the way they should, as the saviour of the world.

He's going to come again as the judge of the world. Advent is about looking back, but it's about looking ahead. as well. He will come like a thief in the night.

[45 : 26] Be aware of the seasons. But the second thing we see is to be aware of the situation. And we see that as we move on in verse 4.

But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. You are not in darkness. This is the blessing the church at Thessalonica had.

And this is the blessing that we have today. We have the word of God. We have the guidance of the word of God. The Lord has spoken. We have the gospel.

The gospel that is good news as we hear so often at this time of year when the angels sang good news of great joy as saviour who is Christ the Lord.

That is the good news. But there is also the warnings in the scriptures as well. The warnings that we have here in Thessalonians chapter 4.

[46 : 29] For the Lord himself will descend it says in verse 16 from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

It's the same message that Joel had. The blessing that he was to his people in the Old Testament when Joel in chapter 2 says verse 1 blow a trumpet and sound an alarm on my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord is coming. It is near. There is warning. The trumpet sound is a warning sound that there is danger that there is a major event coming and so the trumpet will sound.

But who was blessed in Joel's day? Was it everyone who heard that sound? No. It was those who took action in the midst of that sound.

Those who are blessed are the ones who heed the warning. And the same is true for ourselves today. We need to heed the warning of Scripture to enjoy this season and the joy of it, but to realize too that it's pointing ahead to another day, another advent, another coming of the Lord.

[47 : 52] There are those who are in darkness and there are those who are in light. And it's to be in light, that is where we need to find ourselves. And that's what he says here, you are not in darkness, brothers, for this day to surprise you.

You know it's coming, he says. You know he is coming. So prepare, be ready. Don't have a false peace.

The peace that Jeremiah spoke of in the Old Testament when he said peace, peace, when there is no peace. We can easily think we have peace, but all around is the trouble that we don't see because we're in darkness.

There's a waterfall, famous waterfall in Africa, Victoria Falls. It's on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. A bit like the Niagara Falls, they're world famous and many people go to visit them. But they both have a similar thing that happens as well. When there's a raging torrent of water coming down the falls, it creates a mist, almost like a fog that we would see on a calm day, and you can't see properly.

[49 : 04] But people often want to go and visit these because it's so spectacular. And one day there was this man who was visiting Victoria Falls. And he was walking around a pathway that skirts the gorge.

And he saw a sign just towards the edge of the gorge. And he couldn't see it through the mist that the water was creating. And so he decided, I need to go and see that sign, see what it says in case I'm missing something important here.

And so he started just walking towards it. It was quite muddy, it was quite slippery, but he just knew he had to see the sign. But as he came closer to the sign, as he was just about at it, he realised what it said.

And on the sign it said danger, crumbling edge. So the more he was going towards the sign, the more he was putting himself in danger.

The edge of the cliffs there could just collapse. And that's what it is to be in darkness. darkness. We're blinded to the warnings of this world and we're just walking into trouble as it were.

[50 : 12] But he says here, but you are not in darkness. And so the word of God guides us away from the edge of the cliff and it guides us towards the safety that is the rock that is Jesus Christ.

We have warnings in scripture again and again guiding us away from danger. When you look through your Bibles, do you think it says more of the first coming of Christ or the second coming of Christ?

I mean the first coming of Christ was such a monumental occasion when God sent his son into this world as a saviour for the world. Do you think it says more of that or more of the second coming of Christ?

Well the ratio is about eight to one. But it says eight times more about the second coming of the Lord than the first coming of the Lord.

And that's a reminder to us of Advent. It's great to count down towards Christmas time and the first coming, remembering the first coming of the Lord. But it's to be prepared for the second coming.

[51 : 24] We are not in darkness. Another day that people often count down to was that yesterday, what was significant about yesterday was the winter solstice.

So as of today, now the days are getting longer. You may not see it for a while, but that is the case. Somebody said that today we'll have five seconds more daylight than we did yesterday.

It sounds insignificant. It sounds so small, so minute, and yet there's a difference day by day. But imagine the difference between darkness and light through faith in Christ. Just a glimpse of the glory of Christ and the joy of his salvation makes all the difference in our lives. Be aware of the situation that we're in.

There is a danger of drifting away in darkness, but there is a joy and hope of the light of the gospel. We are not in darkness.

[52 : 28] We have light. We have the gospel before us. And so thirdly and finally, I just want us to see here, be aware of the solution. Be aware of the solution.

And you notice that verse 4 has a but there, but you are not in darkness, so you can be ready for the day. Then again in verse 8 it says, but, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for our helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. So if we are aware that the coming of the Lord could be any time, and if we are aware of the different situations that we can find ourselves in, the darkness or the light, well the final thing we have to ask is, what is the solution?

What can we do? How do we prepare for the return of Christ? You make your preparation for Christmas Day, you have a shopping list, you have a list of presents, a list of people you want to invite, you have preparations, everybody is preparing for it.

If you are in the town or around the town the last few days, the place is busy with people all getting ready for that one day, but you wonder, are we putting as much effort, as much focus and much attention into preparing for this day, for the day of the Lord's return?

[54 : 11] The solution is yes, we can enjoy life, we can enjoy the blessings of families and friendships and seasons in this world, but it's to be all in light of the fact that the Lord will return.

As Joel spoke in the Old Testament, and as Paul speaks here, and as Christ himself spoke about this day, it was always with like a two-edged sword. There is the threat of judgment, but there is the hope of salvation.

Verse 9, for God has not destined us for wrath, for judgment, if we are putting our trust in him, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who died for us.

And so it takes us not just to the cradle, to the place of Christ's birth, and to that first advent, but it takes us to the cross, and to the cross where we are able to prepare for the day of the Lord's return, because there we see the reason Christ came into this world to save his people from their sins was by dying on the cross himself, by taking the sin that we have in our hearts, and by giving us the hope of salvation through faith in him.

So there is the solution. Do you need to hear it again? You've heard it how many times you come towards the end of another year, 2024.

[55 : 50] It's hard to believe you in just saying it. It doesn't seem that long ago since we were in 19-something, but here we are, 2024, the end of the year again, and how many times have you heard this?

How many times have you remembered the first coming of the Lord and his birth into this world? But how important is the second coming?

How important is the second advent when he comes to judge the world? The Lord is coming. We remember that he has come and the amazement of that that God would give his son for us.

But let's not forget that he is coming again. The countdown is on, but it's not a date you can mark on your diary or on your calendar. We don't know when.

He will come like a thief in the night. What's the biggest stumbling block for you just now? To stop you from being ready for this day?

[56 : 55] Is it a doubt that this day is not going to come? Or this day is far in the distance? This day is a day I'll prepare for later.

time. The biggest obstacle is this, that you have plenty of time, or so you think. Time is not in our hands.

It is in the Lord's hands. And the Lord says today to be ready. Not just ready for Christmas and this week, but ready for every day.

Lived in light of the Lord could return any time, like a thief in the night, and to be ready. Not saying this to take the joy out of Christmas.

I'm not saying this to be the scrooge who would spoil Christmas Day for anyone. Quite the opposite. I'm saying this so that you will enjoy Christmas on every day to the full.

[58 : 01] Because if you live it in light, not just of his coming in the first place, but remembering he will come again. That he came, as he says in John 15, that we would have life to the full.

And that we would see that life is in him. And that we would put our trust in him today. He is the solution. Because if we put our trust in him, we are ready for that day.

Prepare for this week. prepare for time with family and loved ones. Prepare to enjoy all of these things. But prepare in light of the fact that he will come again.

And when you know this, and when you're ready, then you can rejoice and be glad in him. May he bless you, may he guide you, may he help you to know and to be ready for his second advent.

let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise and thank you for the very fact that you remembered your people, that you sent your son into this world.

[59 : 13] But we thank you too for the fact that he will come again. And we thank you for the word that guides us to that end. That is not a day that we are aware when it will be, but a day that we need to be ready for and help us to prepare our lives accordingly, to look to you, to trust in you, and to know the joy of salvation to the full, not just in the one who was born into this world, but the one who died on the cross for our sins, the one who rose from the grave, the one who ascended into heaven, and the one who will come again.

Look to us, we pray, Lord, look down upon us, bless us, we ask, in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

We're going to conclude by singing again to God's praise in Psalm 43, you'll find this on page 54 of the psalm books, Psalm 43, we'll sing from verse 3 down to the end of the psalm, the tune is Finart, O send your light forth and your truth, let them direct me in your grace, and bring me to your holy hill, and to your sacred dwelling place.

We'll sing from verse 3 to 5 to God's praise, we stand to sing. Amen. singing, singing, singing, To God my joy and my delight

And I will praise you with the heart O God, you are my Lord of night Why are you down as to my soul?

Why are you so disturbed in me? Trust God, for I will praise you yet I say you are my glorious King After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left We won't use the door to my right this morning Just because of the wind outside To stop the drafts coming through the church So we'll just use the main door and the door to my left We'll close with the benediction Now may grace, mercy and peace From God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen

[63 : 53] Amen ■ Amen ■