

## **Worship at Home – 30 November 2025**

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Karen Frost.

Welcome to Worship at Home. As well as the first Sunday in the season of Advent, it's also the season of coughs and colds, and I too have succumbed! I hope you're feeling OK. Having a cold is not an excuse not to worship though, so let's worship together wherever we are! It's good to be with you.

### **Call to worship**

This Sunday of waiting, this Sunday of beginnings. We are waiting Lord, beginning again our journey with you. We are seeking Lord, wanting to know more of you. Come amongst us, by your Spirit. Amen.

### **Hymn      706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1    Longing for light, we wait in darkness.<br>Longing for truth, we turn to you.<br>Make us your own, your holy people,<br>light for the world to see.<br><i>Christ, be our light!</i><br><i>Shine in our hearts.</i><br><i>Shine through the darkness.</i><br><i>Christ, be our light!</i><br><i>Shine in your Church gathered today.</i> | 3    Longing for food, many are hungry.<br>Longing for water, many still thirst.<br>Make us your bread, broken for others,<br>shared until all are fed.        |
| 2    Longing for peace, our world is troubled.<br>Longing for hope, many despair.<br>Your word alone has power to save us.<br>Make us your living voice.   | 4    Longing for shelter, many are homeless.<br>Longing for warmth, many are cold.<br>Make us your building, sheltering others,<br>walls made of living stone. |
|  | 5    Many the gifts, many the people,<br>many the hearts that yearn to belong.<br>Let us be servants to one another,<br>making your kingdom come.              |

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **706**

Words and Music: © 1993 Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213, USA. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

### **Prayers**

And so it begins...Advent. Daily chocolate morsels, burning of candles, wrestling with fairy lights, finding room in the fridge, the YouTube video of 10 ways to gift wrap a wine bottle. Carols to sing, services to prep for, cards to write, mince pies to bake and all before 3pm on 25th December to sit down and watch a speech.

Heavenly Parent, switch off our brains, slow our hearts and lift our eyes to the real beginning, the beginning of the greatest story. Thank you for the blessings you have poured out on us, for the gift of love, gift of time, gift of presence, gift of friendship, gift of your son. Thank you for the gift of Advent, when we can slow down and wait in hope for you. Help us let go of our long lists of to-dos and swamped diaries, our expectations of what Advent should be. In our time together, we long to be drawn to you. Loving God, we welcome you into this space as we gather. Let our worship begin. **Amen.**

### **Hymn      169 STF – Come, thou long -expected Jesus**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1    Come, thou long-expected Jesus,<br>born to set thy people free, | from our fears and sins release us,<br>let us find our rest in thee. |
|--|--|

2 Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

3 Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a king,

born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4 By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone ;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 169

**Readings<sup>1</sup>** Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 24:36-44

**Hymn** 188 STF – There's a light upon the mountains

1 There's a light upon the mountains,  
and the day is at the spring,  
when our eyes shall see the beauty and  
the glory of the King;  
weary was our heart with waiting, and  
the night-watch seemed so long;  
but his triumph-day is breaking, and we  
hail it with a song.

2 There's a hush of expectation, and a  
quiet in the air;  
and the breath of God is moving in the  
fervent breath of prayer:  
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the  
Christ upon the throne,  
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of  
his own.

3 He is breaking down the barriers, he is  
casting up the way;  
he is calling for his angels to build up the  
gates of day:  
but his angels here are human, not the  
shining hosts above;  
for the drum-beats of his army are the  
heart-beats of our love.

4 Hark! We hear a distant music, and it  
comes with fuller swell;  
'tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our  
King, Immanuel:  
Zion, go now forth to meet him; and, my  
soul, be swift to bring  
all your finest and your noblest for the  
triumph of our King!

Henry Burton (1840–1930)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 188

## Reflection

The season of Advent opens with an invitation... to the mountain or house of the Lord and to a time of peace. Isn't that just what the world needs to hear, at the end of 2025?

The verses we heard from Isaiah chapter 2 speak of a gathering of people from 'all the nations', not just a few people, for they will 'stream' to 'the mountain of the Lord's house'. What is meant by this beautiful phrase is more to do with theology than geography - it's about getting close to the presence of God. The mountain of the Lord is where God dwells and where God can be encountered, although not without mystery, awe and wonder. This bit of Isaiah comes from a period when Israel had been having a rough time to say the least. There is a glorious future, unbelievable as it may seem at the moment. This message of future hope is clearly an important message as it comes repeatedly in Scripture. E.g. in Micah chapter 4. We don't know who wrote them first or who borrowed them from whom, but clearly the repetition only serves to underline how vital it is that we take note. So can we hear that as a message for today? Not a simplistic message, this isn't about waving a magic wand and seeing problems disappear, but it is a statement of faith in a God who has not yet finished with the world or with the human race. We can and must hear that now. The invitation is to us as well. What will happen if we respond and make our way up to the mountain of the Lord? There will be teaching – God's word will be spoken - and, because God's word is a word of peace, there will be reconciliation. God will take the role of an

arbitrator, finding ways to bring people together so that, in that beautiful image, weapons of war will become instead tools of agriculture and well-being. Swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks. For ancient Israel, war was a fact of life, it was how to survive in a tribal world. But in this vision, Isaiah foretells a time when no-one will need to learn about how to wage war, when no nation will lift up a sword against another. Oh, how we pray that for Russia and Ukraine, for the Middle East, for Sudan, for so many places in our world today. The opening words of Isaiah make it clear that none of this has happened yet, it will be 'in days to come' and so we, in this Advent season, are called to work and pray for those days to come, those days of peace and good will. That's as good a way to prepare for Christmas as there is!

It may be a little more challenging to link this message to today's Gospel passage which comes towards the end of Jesus' life. We may need to remind ourselves that Advent is the season in the church's year when we intentionally turn our thoughts to what is sometimes called 'the end times'. The return of Christ is an aspect of our Christian faith which we tend to ignore for much of the year, but it is there in the creed, 'We believe... He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.' So let's not miss the Advent invitation to think about that a little more deeply too. This belief is deeply rooted in the Hebrew scriptures, where, as we have seen in our verses from Isaiah, there is a sense of longing for that kingdom of peace and harmony, to which Isaiah invites us. Over the six centuries or so between Isaiah and Jesus, that has become an expectation of these 'end times' with some kind of cataclysmic happening. So, at the start of chapter 24, when Jesus tells his disciples that the majestic temple building will be thrown down, we find them responding by asking Jesus, "Tell us, when will this be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Today's verses are part of his extensive answer to that question. They begin with a warning that whenever the end comes, it will be unexpected and unpredicted. So don't waste time on trying to work out a date. Be prepared for something which may happen at any time. Noah is mentioned – he had to adapt to unexpected circumstances! As is a thief – not, perhaps the happiest of images for us as we anticipate the end of time as we know it, but the point is more about the unexpectedness of Christ's return than about its nature.

There are other images in these verses which are not easy to digest; the image of people being separated as some enter the new kingdom and others are left behind. Again, people have spent much time and energy on such verses, but perhaps the point we all need to take is simply what Jesus goes on to say – 'keep awake... be ready'. But, we may say, how can we be ready for something when we don't know when it will happen? Whilst ignorance of the day may lead to spiritual lethargy, Jesus in Matthew demonstrates that it can also lead to moral preparation.

There is only one way to be ready at the right time, and that is to be ready all the time. How might our lives be different if we lived each day looking out for invitations from God? Invitations to notice the glory and splendour of creation, to step aside from busy-ness and sense God's presence? Invitations to notice a need in a neighbour or stranger.

And what about this goal of peace? How might we work for peace to come, as foretold by prophets for so many hundreds of years? Again, perhaps, our best way to is to be found in the little things. Not many of us have power or influence at international level to negotiate peace treaties or arbitrate between nations. But we can pray for those who do. Peace is more than that, isn't it? It is also about how we live our lives day by day, about how we speak to each other, at home, in church, in our neighbourhood. It is even about how we speak to cold callers on the telephone! Peace is about how, as a community, we come to decisions when there is disagreement, and how we deal with contradictory convictions. Peace is about every aspect of our lives and if we genuinely want to be part of God's future kingdom of peace, for which we pray and yearn in this Advent season, perhaps we need to start looking for and accepting whatever invitations to peace

come our way now. For perhaps it is as we learn to spot and respond to these daily invitations that we are learning to be ready for the final invitation to the mountain of the Lord?

## Prayers for all God's people

You may wish to pause after each section to say aloud or silently situations/people you wish to pray for.

We hear the invitation today to pray for peace and we respond...

Gracious God, we hold before you the nations of the world who will one day stream to your mountain, but who now are so preoccupied with war and greed. We name before you those lands where peace is a distant dream as we pray for peace...

Gracious God, we hold before you this nation. We hear your invitation to our lands to draw close to you and yet all around we see strife, greed, selfishness and exploitation. We name before you those situations in our land where we pray for peace...

Gracious God, we hold before you this community in which we live. We give thanks for the witness of Christians and we hold in our thoughts those who have not yet heard your invitation. We name before you those individuals and groups locally who need your peace...

Gracious God, we hold before you people we know who are hurting today, because of physical, spiritual or mental illness, for whom peace is hard to find because of pain or turmoil. We name before you those we know and love who long to know your peace today...

Gracious God, we hold ourselves before you today. In a moment of silence we recognise all within us which does not make for peace, all our conflicts, jealousies, grudges or feuds which prevent your peace from coming... We name these silently before you, praying for your peace to conquer our own hearts...

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Thanks be to God.

You may wish to say out loud the **Lord's Prayer** in a version or translation you prefer.

## Hymn      503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1    Love divine, all loves excelling,<br>joy of heaven to earth come down,<br>fix in us thy humble dwelling,<br>all thy faithful mercies crown.<br>Jesu, thou art all compassion,<br>pure, unbounded love thou art ;<br>visit us with thy salvation,<br>enter every trembling heart. | serve thee as thy hosts above,<br>pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,<br>glory in thy perfect love.   |
| 2    Come, almighty to deliver,<br>let us all thy life receive ;<br>suddenly return, and never,<br>never more thy temples leave.<br>Thee we would be always blessing,   | 3    Finish then thy new creation,<br>pure and spotless let us be ;<br>let us see thy great salvation,<br>perfectly restored in thee :<br>changed from glory into glory,<br>till in heaven we take our place,<br>till we cast our crowns before thee,<br>lost in wonder, love, and praise ! |

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 503

## Blessing

Advent, patient God, as we rise from this place, draw us to your light, draw us to you, draw us to the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, And may that same Spirit be among us, and remain with us always. **Amen.**

### **Acknowledgements**

<sup>1</sup>New International Reader's Version (NIRV) Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All other material from Twelvebaskets, used with permission.

All hymns reproduced under CCLi 570443.