

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT [C]

Jr. 33: 14 – 16

1 Thess. 3: 12 – 4: 2

Lk. 21: 25 – 28, 34 – 36

I can't believe that another year's whizzed by, and Christmas is nearly upon us.

More and more I know what people mean when they say that as you get older time goes more quickly!

I don't know.... maybe reaching 65 in June has made me think like this.

Advent is a good time to reflect on what life is all about; to sit with Jesus to reassess the way I live my life as a disciple of His.

He asks me to trust Him in all things, and that brings to my mind this verse from Hebrews: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." [Heb. 13: 8](#)

Jesus is the 'Faithful One.'

Jesus, whom the Father loves; who "Has placed everything in his hands [so that] whoever believes in him has eternal life."

[Jn. 3: 35 – 36](#)

Advent, I think, is a particularly good time to do a stock-take of our lives with Jesus, for these reasons.

We look back to the stable in Bethlehem when: "The Word became a human being [and] made his home among us." [Jn. 1: 14](#)

We look forward to the 'Day of the Lord' when Jesus returns in glory to take us home to Him.

By looking back to Bethlehem, and forward to that great 'Day' when Jesus returns, focuses my heart on how I'm living as a Christian now.

And it does so because the Holy Spirit makes Jesus alive in me now.

He's not just a person from the past, or an event sometime in an unknown future: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

So what can I learn from these reflections?

That Jesus has my life in His hands now, and eternally, which means I can begin to trust in the Lord; to put my worries in His hands so that I can face life with all of its triumphs and tragedies: that is easier said than done, I know.

I don't mean that we should be 'happy clappy' people who put on a false and fixed Christian smile in the face of tragedy and sadness.

"Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful! [Phil. 4: 4](#) might appear that Paul, in those words from Philippians, is telling us we should.

Paul was a realist though: he didn't deny that we all have difficulties, but he does encourage us to always rejoice in the Lord's mercy, His promises, and His abiding presence in our lives.

However good our lives are: happy marriage and family, a good job, and all the blessings of life, the foundation for rejoicing is not any of these, but the Lord, in whom true joy is to be found.

If the joy of the Lord is deep in our hearts, then nothing can take that away: "It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within [us], giving [us] eternal life." [John 4: 14](#)

Yes, we can make do with the spiritual equivalent of Thames Valley tap water; or we can really desire to drink from the well of the Holy Spirit; to have a deep relationship with Jesus.

All of today's readings, in their different ways, are about rejoicing and trusting in the Lord.

In Jeremiah's time, things were grim for the People of God: when they looked back over the history of their recent kings, they saw a line of failures.... except for King David.

If only we had David, they dreamed: but David's family line was exhausted, and the glory days were gone.

Yet, the Lord promises this: "I will make a godly Branch grow from David's royal line." [Jer. 33: 15](#)

God is faithful and true in His promises to us: that 'Godly branch' is Jesus, the Saviour.

In the Gospel, Jesus could be writing the script for a horror film with His description of world events prior to His return at the end of time.

A time when: “People will be terrified at what they see coming upon the earth.” Lk. 21: 26

But then Jesus says something extraordinary: “When all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!” Lk. 21: 28

Don't be afraid, rejoice instead: I'm coming back to take you home as I promised you.

When Jesus will return, only the Father knows; but Paul tells us how to prepare **NOW** for our meeting with Jesus; either at His Second Coming, or our death, whichever comes first: “May the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow. May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen.” 1 Th. 3: 12 – 13