

First Sunday of Advent
Sunday, 28th November 2021



Unfortunately, Revd Jax has come down with Covid and is very poorly. Christine Targett has very generously allowed me to use her choice of Psalm for the Prayer Group in place of Revd Jax' words this week with some accompanying prayers.

"This week's psalm is Psalm 48. I have chosen it because it seems we are all having to make decisions at the present time and the last verse (14) of the psalm is particularly encouraging.

*For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.*

Psalm 48. A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah.

- 1 Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.*
- 2 Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.*
- 3 God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.*
- 4 When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together,*
- 5 they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror.*
- 6 Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labour.*
- 7 You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish shattered by an east wind.*
- 8 As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord Almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever.*
- 9 Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.*
- 10 Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.*
- 11 Mount Zion rejoices, the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments.*
- 12 Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers,*
- 13 consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation.*
- 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.*

The last verse of Psalm 48 also fits well with a well-known verse from Isaiah – 58:11

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

A Guard and A Guide (Scripture Union Notes on Psalm 48)

This psalm is a celebration of the security of Zion. Because Jerusalem has been destroyed several times since it was written, the central phrase, ‘God makes her secure for ever’ (v8) may refer prophetically to the new Jerusalem, where God will live for ever with all believers. This means that the song is relevant to all who follow Christ; we shall all experience the beauty of praising Him to the end of the earth (vs 9-11).

It describes what the city’s residents would do after rebutting an attack or siege – they would tour the city, inspecting its defences and praising God for His protection in times of battle. In times of triumph, and after God has brought us through great trials, we ought to inspect our defences and ensure that our spiritual foundations remain strong. Things like faith in God, knowledge of his Word and the fellowship and prayers of the body of believers are critical to our long-term flourishing. Then we should praise God for His gracious protection!

The first line of the psalm promises not only that God will guard us but also that ‘He will be our guide even to the end’ (v14). As we make our way through life, we have the Holy Spirit as a personal guide, a constant companion who has an intimate knowledge of the Way and of the unique intricacies of each one of us. Any anxiety or fear is banished by this revelation that our loving God is both our Guard and our Guide, our Protector and our Companion. Even as we seek to live out the next chapters of Acts, we are reassured by these truths.

Lord, let us know the security and peace of Your presence; You are always guiding us in Your ways and directing us. Let all anxiety and worry fade.

The “well-watered garden’ (Isaiah 58:11) takes us in turn to last Sunday’s Radio 4 Sunday Worship which was concerned with gardens, plants and watering. The programme also included some lovely singing from Tenebrae, The Sixteen and the Cambridge Singers, with music composed by, amongst others, John Rutter and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0011rml>

Picking up last week’s Prayer Group theme of Thomas Hardy and psalms, the programme also included a song and a poem by him.

Walking home on the coldest of Winter nights, Thomas Hardy is surprised by the melody of a thrush’s voice – piercing the dark and cold:

Music: Sing gently - by Eric Whitacre

Reading: The Darkling Thrush by Thomas Hardy

Prayers

A Celtic Prayer:

God with me protecting
The Lord with me directing
The Spirit with me strengthening:
a constant light in dark times
for ever and for evermore

Lord of infinite compassion and ceaseless love, we pray that you will grant your healing grace to all in need of help, and restore to those in distress peace of mind and serenity of spirit. Amen

Loving God, as we look back with gratitude, help us to look forward with hope, upward with praise, an outward with love, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Merciful Father, may all who suffer be sustained and comforted by the gentle strength of your presence and the warmth and power of your love and peace, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

An Advent poem

Advent Calendar *by Rowan Williams*

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
Has flayed the trees to bone, and earth
Wakes choking on the mould,
The soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
Opens on mist, to find itself
Arrested in the net
Of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
And penny-masks its eye to yield
The star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
Will come like crying in the night,
Like blood, like breaking,
As the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Collect Prayer for the First Sunday of Advent



Almighty God,
as your kingdom dawns,
turn us from the darkness of sin to the
light of holiness,
that we may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Luke 21: 25-36 – The Coming of the Son of Man

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Exhortation to Watch

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below

Please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>28th Nov</i>	4pm – Advent Compline		Patronal Festival	Morning Prayer and Baptism	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)
<i>5th Dec</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Posada		6pm – Autumn Mediations – Maximillian Kolbe
<i>12th Dec</i>		6pm – Carol Service	Holy Communion	6pm – Carol Service	10am - Carol Service
<i>19th Dec</i>	4pm – Carol Service	Holy Communion	6pm – Carol Service		
<i>22nd Dec (Wed)</i>			Mid-Week Holy Communion		
<i>24th Dec</i>	4pm – Crib Service	4.30pm – Nativity in the Barn	4pm – Crib service	4pm – Crib Service and 11.30pm – Midnight Service	2.30pm – Crib Service
<i>25th Dec</i>	Family Service	Family Service	Holy Communion	Family Service	Family Service
<i>26th Dec</i>	No Services				
<i>2nd Jan</i>	Morning Prayer		4pm – Café Church	10am – Patronal Festival - BCP Sung Eucharist	