



# Sunday Reflection

## Season of Advent

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 29 November 2020

# Advent Sunday

The world and each of us as individuals face many difficulties, pain and distractions. As we enter the season of Advent we are called afresh to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man into our world to gather his chosen people.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory." *Mark 13:26***

### An Illustration to set the scene

For people who work outside or enjoy outdoor leisure activities, clouds are literally signs of what is to come. At harvest time farm workers keep an eye on the skies for the dark clouds that signal that crops need to be got in before they are ruined by rain. Roofers know they need work fast to finish the roof before rain comes. Fishermen know to batten down the hatches and get back to the safety of harbour. People out walking start getting raincoats out of rucksacks, while those on the hills hurry down before their view is obscured and surfaces become slippery.

### Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

In today's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples that the Son of Man is "coming in clouds". He is talking to people who lived off the land and sea, for whom watching clouds was part of daily life

and for whom clouds signalled change and the need for action. But he is not only making references to weather events. His life and teachings are steeped in references to the Old Testament, showing that he is the fulfilment of God's promises. Indeed, physical natural events are often pointers to God's presence and actions. The burning bush signalled God's presence before God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. As they gathered at the base of Mount Sinai to meet God there was "a thick cloud on the mountain", before God gave them the Ten Commandments. In today's first reading Jerusalem is desolate and the people have forgotten God, when Isaiah begs God to "tear open the heavens and come down".

The Gospel writers understand that these are all events and revelations of which Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment. Jesus telling his disciples about "the Son of Man coming in clouds" comes at a moment of great crisis, followed by the ultimate revelation of God's love for us. Crisis, for it is two days before Passover and the chief priests and scribes are looking for a way to kill him. Revelation, for in Jesus' death and resurrection God's love is once and for all revealed to us. Jesus predicts hard times to come; his disciples will be persecuted as they proclaim a Gospel that threatens the secular and religious powers of the day. People will be led astray, follow false prophets and turn against each other even within their own families. He knows how difficult it will be for his followers to keep looking out for his return. But the signs will be there – as obvious as buds on leaves showing that spring is coming – and we must stay awake to them.

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, knows that the Corinthians' understanding of Christ's teaching and their spiritual gifts will keep them faithful and ready. Yet even in Corinth work is still to be done. Paul chides members of the church for failing,

quarrelling among themselves and not holding true to Christ's teaching. "Keep awake," says Jesus. Yet only a few days later the disciples, all too humanly, fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

We can be worn out by all we have to do, by our very real pains and struggles. How to stay ready? How to keep awake for the coming of Christ? The example of the church in Corinth gives us clues. We can steep ourselves in the Gospels, so developing our spiritual gifts. We can give time to listening to God.

R. S. Thomas, the Welsh poet and priest, puts it this way:

But the silence in the mind  
is when we live best, within  
listening distance of the silence  
we call God. This is the deep  
calling to deep...

In today's reading from Isaiah we have the assurance of God's love for us, for we are all the work of God the potter. In our second reading Paul assures the Corinthians that "God is faithful". In turn, as we prepare for the coming of Christ, in a stable and with clouds of glory, we need to be awake to notice God's arrival among us and hear God's call.

**"Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory." *Mark 13:26***

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**

