

Sunday 7 December – Second Sunday of Advent

Sermon by Christine Newmarch

An audio recording of the sermon from St Luke's will be available after the service at [Sermons \(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk\)](http://Sermons(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk))

Advent is all about watching and waiting for Jesus.

Of course, we have heard the story before, and can be sure that the baby Jesus will be born safely in the early hours of Christmas Day. In the commercial world there is no encouragement for waiting, but here inside the church, and in our hearts too, there is value in being patient, and giving ourselves to preparing to meet God afresh at Christmas.

Let's think about waiting: is waiting easy? Who is good at waiting? Has that come with practice....

In shops

Waiting for the bus

Or at an airport

For exam results

Waiting to see what Santa may have brought.

Waiting for Christmas means getting ready in lots of ways:

Shopping, buying presents for others, writing cards to show we love our friends and neighbours.

Is that enough? If we don't make some space for the new things we might receive, we may not enjoy them.

Perhaps we should do some decluttering.

Imagine you were invited to stay in a rich relation's house while they were away for a long, long time. The only thing you must do is keep it clean and tidy. Of course, you would intend keeping it spick and span, but maybe over the years, things would accumulate, old newspapers and weeds in the garden. Suddenly, you receive a call to say the owner is on his way back.

What would you do? You would be pleased you had a warning and time to clean and tidy up.

John the Baptist was doing just that. Preaching about the sins which separated the people from God, and the things they needed to change to be ready for Jesus coming.

Turning back to God was about much more than housework, it meant getting cleaned up inside too. Spiritual cleansing.

Making a choice to stop doing the wrong things and choosing to live the right way. The people listening to John's warning were baptised in the River Jordan as a sign that they were turning back to God, and would be ready to meet Jesus when he came.

We know that one day Jesus will return in glory to judge all of us, so Advent is about more than preparing to welcome Jesus at the crib afresh; it is about preparing for his triumphal return. Isaiah tells us that He will not be fooled by appearances or easy words. He will come with righteousness and judgement.

We want that to be like this... (slide image)

And not like this.... (slide image)

The Church of England's theme for Advent this year is 'Joy,' so in all the busyness of the world, Advent is a gift to us: a time to prepare our hearts for Jesus' return.

Perhaps by studying seasonal books...

Praying, or just being quiet for a while each day.

We so not know when he will come, at midnight or daybreak, so waiting to make new year resolutions in 2026 is not enough. Let us use these last weeks of Advent not to weary of waiting, but to be ready to greet Jesus both as baby and as our king. Amen.