**Worship Outline including a Reflection for the First Sunday of Advent**

**Opening Verse of Scripture   1 Corinthians Chapter 1:8-9**

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

**Collect: Prayer for the Day**

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**First Reading: Isaiah 64.1-9**

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name,  or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;  we are the clay, and you are our potter;  we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity for ever.  Now consider, we are all your people.

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.3-9**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Gospel Reading: Mark 13.24-37**

‘But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

**Reflection for the Feast of Christ the King**

***“What I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”***

Today, the first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the new church liturgical year. Advent is a time of watching and waiting, but this does not mean standing around with our hands in our pockets hoping that one day Jesus is going to appear on a cloud. Neither does fulfilment come on December 25 when we symbolically place the doll in a crib scene. Advent has been seen as a time of looking to the future to see if we can discern Jesus return. It is like one of those taxi people at an airport by the arrivals holding a sign with the name of the person they are supposed to give a lift. This image rightly captures the Advent message of being alert, but it fails miserably to see that Jesus has already arrived, and now being ‘alert’ and ‘watching’ means ensuring that we are about his business.

In Luke today Jesus uses apocalyptic language to encourage the faithful to be participants with God in his purposes, even in the most difficult of times. Jesus tells us to “be on guard so that our hearts are not weighed down with... the worries of this life” [v. 34]. This might especially be true of Christmas but it is also for throughout the year, an invitation not lose the focus of our faith, but to be fully attentive so that we might not miss any opportunity for participation in God’s ongoing work of creative transformation. This is the work to which Advent and the new church year calls us.

Today on the first Sunday of Advent we see Jesus in apocalyptic preaching, telling that the old systems, the old kingdoms, are falling away so that God’s kingdom, with all of the power of Christ’s love can come in its place. This rebuilding is taking place now and we are a part of it, all who are not idly standing in the airport but living as citizens of the kingdom of God.

So, this is a time of reaffirm our trust in God’s promises and ensure that we are alive to seeing Jesus in our midst and ensuring that we are sharing in his work. If Jesus were to physically walk the streets of our community, what would he see and say and do? What concerns are there on the heart of God for the people around us and are these our concerns? We Christians are supposed to be part of the Kingdom of God, going about this world as citizens living out the new ways to which we have been called.

It is unsurprising that we might walk past Jesus in the street without recognising him. This is exactly what the Bible tells us characterised his birth and subsequent life. While a few Magi and shepherds came and worshipped and Herod tried to have him killed, the rest of the world got on with business as usual. The truth is that Jesus just didn’t live up to the expectations which people had of him, in fact for most he was a bit of a disappointment. They wanted so much more in the sense of fulfilling the human desire for excitement and power.

While Christmas preparations are unavoidable, we need to work on living in the present and not let the season's preparations divert our attention. This year, as we celebrate and enjoy all the best that Christmas has to offer with family and friends, may we keep awake and seek to understand what we need to do and be so that if Jesus passes us in the street we might recognise him and respond to him. Amen.

**Post Communion Prayer**

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.