

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)**  
**SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2020**  
**YEAR B (ADVENT 1)**  
**READINGS: ISAIAH 64:1-9// PSALM 80:1-7,17-19//**  
**1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9//MARK 13; 24-37**

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**PRAYER**

*Dear Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit on us so that we may keep watch for the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Today is the first Sunday in Advent and the season of Advent marks the beginning of the Church's liturgical year.

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival".

On the one hand Advent emphasises the Christ who came as the Child born in Bethlehem. This is a source of joy and gladness for us in celebrating and remembering God's precious gift of a Saviour for the world. On the other hand we still await the Second Coming of our Lord in faith and great expectations. The season of Advent is therefore marked by a spirit of hope, of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing, of caring and of celebration.

Let us turn to our Gospel reading:

Mark's gospel was written during the Jewish revolt against Rome (66-70 AD) when Christians experienced terrible persecution. It was written as a response to the end of the war as a story of hope and of Good News in the midst of that immense tragedy.

Mark chapter 13 is the last extended conversation between Jesus and his disciples prior to his own suffering and death. In this section Jesus talks about the end times, the last things and his second coming. [These words are part of what is called the A-PO-CA-LYP-TIC Discourse. Apocalyptic literature usually comes out of difficult times and typically proclaims a message of hope in coded language and must be explained and interpreted].

In Mark 13:24-25 *"But in those days, following that distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken"*

And in Mark 13:5-8 we read (\*this is not part of this morning's Gospel reading but it refers to the days of distress//of trouble) ***“Jesus said Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name claiming “I am he and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen but the end is still to come. Nations will rise against nations and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places and famines. These are the beginnings of birth pains.”***

So what we have here is trouble and distressful times with alarming signs in nature which spread fear, terror and desperation amongst the people of the world at that time.

Today 2000 years later we still experience terrible disasters and wars, terrorist attacks, conflict and political instability in some countries in the world. Natural disasters, (South Africa experienced two earthquakes) the effect of climate change, and our biggest challenge for this year 2020-- the COVID 19 pandemic. Which caused emotional, psychological, and economical challenges everywhere in the world

In South Africa the situation is not much better Strikes widespread corruption in parliament and the police force, unemployment, the rising cost of living and the high crime rate and the high percentage of Gender Based Violence especially during Lockdown.

In our own lives we experienced our own personal challenges and heartaches and maybe you are still going through a distress and trouble time this morning. It may be

\*the loss of a loved one--- and for the first time will not be there to share in the Christmas celebrations

\*the loss of the comfortable, familiar, the safe because of COVID 19

\*Maybe you experience a sense of anxiety that is caused of the loss of a job

\* or the financial stress of having lived beyond your means.

So yes today we still experience alarming signs which spread fear, terror and desperation in the world in our country and in our communities and in our own personal lives.

And you may ask the question how will I find my way forward when the usual light that illumined my path no longer shine? What do I do when my world is falling apart? Where do I go when it seems as if darkness is my only companion and God is nowhere to be seen?

How can we look forward and prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ when we are surrounded by so much pain and suffering and anxiety?

Although Jesus warns his disciples of the persecution he also gives them hope. In Mark 13v 26 we read ***“and then the Son of man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send the angels out to the four corners of the earth to gather God’s chosen people from one end of the world to the other.”***

Jesus had been describing frightening signs of change, but instead of telling us to get into shelters and cover and hide ourselves Jesus offers words of comfort, words of hope. The Son of man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

And in 1 Corinthians 1 v 8 we read ***“Christ will keep you strong to the end”***

The first Advent candle that was lit this morning symbolises ***hope*** and the following prayer was said

***We light this candle to remind us that He is our hope of the world. We thank God for the promises He has made to us and for the Light He has brought into the world.***

Advent is therefore a time that reminds us Jesus Christ came 2000 years to be fully human to experience first-hand all our suffering, pain, problems, challenges, distress and to bring us ***Hope***,. Advent reminds us of God’s reality and presence through his Son Jesus Christ in our darkest time, and he meets us at our very point of need and longing and yearning.

***However we are not only reminded of Jesus’ first coming but we are also challenged to be watchful, alert and to be on guard as we await the Second coming of Jesus Christ.***

In Mark 13: v 32- 34 we read ***“No one knows about the day or hour not even the angels in heaven nor the Son but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It is like a man going away. He leaves his house and put his servants in charge each with his assigned task and tells the one at the door to keep watch”.***

***What does this mean?***

The season of Advent is a good time to stop and reflect on the true meaning of (*Advent*)—the Second coming of Jesus Christ –and will you and I be ready.

***How can we be ready?***

***Firstly to be watchful, alert and on guard  
How?***

By Strengthening our spiritual life and our relationship with God // Be discipline and committed in prayer// Bible study// regular worship together with our fellow brothers and sisters and partake in the Holy Eucharist.

*Secondly as we wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ we have work to do.(we can't just wait)*

Last week we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King and we were reminded of Jesus establishing God's kingdom here on earth. My brothers and sisters we are called to be fellow workers with Christ in God's Kingdom.

We are the servants that Jesus Christ has put in charge each with his/her own assigned task

We are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people

We are called to live out our Christian life in our communities – loving our neighbours as ourselves – sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with our neighbours.

God has put us his followers in charge – and, as the Church he expects us to fulfil His mission here on earth.

As we prepare and await the Second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world Let us reach out to those in need, the poor, the lonely, the aged. Let us especially speak out against Gender Based Violence. In our communities

Two have the parishioners have challenged me and asked me Reeva what did St Paul's do the vulnerable and needy what kind of outreach programs did we have during Lockdown

And sadly I had to say NOTHING. Because of all the break- ins, and vandalism we have experienced these past months all our energy and finances went to secure our Church.

### **In conclusion**

You will agree with me 2020 was a difficult challenging year and disrupted all of our lives, being it financially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and psychologically. But

This morning I want to ask you 'What can we as St Paul's family do reach out to the vulnerable and needy and give hope to a broken and discouraged community?'

Furthermore I want to challenge each one of us (personally) to commit ourselves to reach out to one person or family or support one course and bring hope and joy.

It doesn't mean it have to be financially maybe there is other needs and difficulties that the person experience. Reflected on it and ask God's discernment to show you someone that you can reach out too.

Theresa of Avila reminds us that

*Christ has no body but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
Ours are the eyes with which he looks  
with Compassion on this world,  
Ours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Ours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Ours are the hands, ours are the feet,  
Ours are the eyes, we are his body.  
Christ has no body now but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
ours are the eyes with which he looks  
with compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but ours*