

Advent 1 – Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020

This year during Advent, we are going to think about two things. The faith story up to the time when Jesus was born and the faith story that continues to this day and includes all of us.

Through this season there will be 20 mini videos, one each day from Monday to Friday beginning on Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> November and I hope you will find the time to tune in and share the topic for the day – they will last less than 5 minutes. You can watch them any time you like, they will go public in the early hours of the morning each day.

Either direct from You-tube or  
Via the links on the sermons page of the church website.

Each week, we will follow the traditional theme of the advent candles and help us understand why Jesus birth was such an important event in the salvation story. On Sundays we can reflect on our faith as part of that story.

Week one – the Patriarchs (and Matriarchs) of the faith story  
Week two – the prophets, declaring God's salvation  
Week three – the Messenger, John the Baptist and week four  
Well of course that is the Christmas story.

The videos are a collaboration between church and Primary school and are suitable for all ages.

This coming week you will hear...

How it all started with Adam and Eve  
About Abraham and Sarah who followed God  
A strange story from the life of Jacob  
We realise just how important King David becomes and

See how the good the bad and those who behave in an ugly way are nevertheless all part of Jesus family tree.

I look forward to sharing them with you.

So, to this week.

How do you explain to children why we have Christmas?

Actually, children are unlikely to ask...because why rock the boat on a celebration that involves getting a mound of presents? Apart from Scrooge, a few harassed parents and the occasional grumpy Vicar, everybody loves Christmas.

Why did Jesus come?

All good stories start at the very beginning and our advent journey to Christmas is the same. It begins in Genesis and begins with Adam and Eve. The first people are naturally enough the first ones to sin and their sin separates them from God, just as ours does. The need for a Saviour to come and put things right is in the first few pages of the bible.

On Tuesday we shall hear the same reading we have just had from Karen. The call of Abram. In a world where people concentrated mostly on themselves and their own needs, Abram sought God. What mattered to him was to experience and hear God.

It turns out Abram was quite wealthy and so you could argue he had the leisure time to think about God – time that is denied virtually everyone else. It's a good argument. But God doesn't just seek out the wealthy who have a mind to reflect on such matters. The faith story passes on to Isaac and his son Jacob and he was penniless and on the run when he encountered God. The faith

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story comes to David when he was a young boy of no real account – he looked after the sheep. He had a heart for God.

By the time we get to Friday we are thinking about how the faith story stretching across the whole Old Testament includes rich and poor, sinner and saint, men and women and in Hebrews it says

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.

Like Abram who of course gets an upgrade to Abraham. God promised he would be the father of a nation. He couldn't possibly live to see that come true and yet he believed God's promises.

And I love how the writer of Hebrews runs out of space to name everyone, so puts in a few names as an illustration...

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets,

Each of them played a part in the faith story and we are playing our part in the faith story. Had the writer of Hebrews had time and space and a prophetic ministry he could have named Karen and Robert who read the scriptures today. Or Carol, or Dolapo, or Terry, or Gilly (I've mentioned them because they all happen to be here!).

He could have named you and me and all those of us who long to see God's kingdom, who live in hope for its fulfilment, and in the meantime, live in the grace of Jesus Christ. We sang earlier – our scars are a sign, of grace in our lives and Father how you brought us through. The trials and troubles we experience are the opportunities for God to show his love to us.

Advent reminds us that Jesus came to make a way for those of us shut out through sin and Advent reminds us He will come again in his glory to fulfil all the promises and restore God's Kingdom in all its fulness.

Advent celebrates the Salvation Story of love, that stretches from before time and will still hold us fast when all that we see has gone and all that we long for has come.

It's not just Abraham who is called to follow into an unknown, we are too, allowing our faith stories to be the means of displaying God's kingdom of forgiveness, love and grace.

So today, whether you are weary or feel a failure, confident and joyful at answered prayer, hopeful or uncertain...let's re-commit to following – and join together in Salvation's song.

Amen.

**Rev. Jon Hutchinson**