

**CALM & BRIGHT SERIES – ‘RIDING THE STORM’ – ADVENT 1**

As we enter the season of Advent, we should perhaps need no reminding that our focus and prayers should be about preparation: preparing to celebrate the birthday of our saviour, to again consider this event in the context of God’s one overall and continuing plan for His creation, and to prepare for our Saviour’s return. We start with being real about where we are right now living as followers of Jesus; preparation often requires a gift of the Spirit, patience. There are times in our lives when things are far from easy, and life presents a real challenge to our faith. Jesus told his disciples, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), just as the faithful Paul experienced (2 Corinth 6:3-10), and so also, from of old, we read in the Psalms.

**Read Psalm 25:1-10**

Obviously a prayer from a position of anguish, with which many will identify. *How and why is it possible to be faithfully following the Christian life and yet there are times when life becomes full of problems? Where is God at such times? Notice how this prayer psalm finishes (v 20-21). What would you draw from this? Hope, ‘my hope is in you’, used in this context, is better understood as ‘trust’; and trust often requires patience. (If you have time, read the great ‘living in hope’ passage, 1 Peter 1:3-9). What were your thoughts, within our Advent context, about how God will answer the final prayer request? (V.22)*

**Read Luke 21: 25-36**

Jesus, the Son of Man, tells his disciples that he will return in glory. His return will be clearly signposted, and will shatter all that the world holds as ‘fixed and normal’. We are to keep prepared for that day, a joyful day for his true followers, when our patience, our faith, our hope, will be rewarded with our redemption.

How easy it is to become weary or downhearted as we wait in hope for Christ’s return. So much around seems ungodly and ‘everyone’ has negative views of ‘the Bible, Christianity and the church’. *Do you think your answer to these challenges is any different from the answers which must have been given by the Christians just a few years after Jesus’ resurrection? If so, explain? Being always patient with those around and even with God can sometimes seem like a trial. Do you ever think you have lost touch with Jesus? What has helped you back?*

Jesus cautions us to keep watchful and awake, to be prepared. “Come Lord Jesus” is the Advent mantra, to which Richard Rohr writes, “Perfect fullness is always to come, and we do not need to demand it now. This keeps the field wide open and especially open to grace and to a future created by God rather than ourselves.” *What expectations and demands of life can you let go of so that you can be more prepared for the coming of Jesus?*

**Prayer:** *Keep us alert, Lord, to your coming day by day, in the truth we can learn, the good we can do, the love we can share. May our repentance, our obedience and our joy daily welcome you.*