

Advent



Advent is the season in which we consider our accountability for the world, our own actions and the future, and central to this is the theme of justice and peace.

During the four Sundays, we hear bible readings and prayers based on the theme of justice and peace. All over the world, in every country, and expressed in every language, the universal aspirations of humanity for justice and peace have been heard from time immemorial.

So how come they have eluded every generation of humanity?

Having eluded us, do we have to face up to the reality that we have been deluded in the first place?

Since they are so elusive, are justice and peace not now to be finally consigned to the realms of fantasy, rather than taken seriously as achievable goals?

Is peace now to be reserved for the meanderings of the armchair theologian, or the amateur utopian philosopher? Or the deranged politician?

Fantasy or reality? Which is it to be?

Is it possible to say that after so many thousands of years of things going wrong, that we still seriously hope and pray for justice and peace in our world and in our time?

It is tempting to say “Let’s be realistic and admit failure.”

It is tempting to be cynical and say “We’ll never get there.”

If you and I are tempted to feel like this, let us remember some very deep and important things. Once we admit that justice and peace are not what we believe in for our world, we consign humanity to a downward spiral of moral vacuum. If we don’t lift up our eyes to the summit, we will never start the climb, but settle for the foothills.



If we don't set the best before our eyes, and the eyes of our children, then their faith in their own future will degenerate and disappear.

One of the things we like about our young people is when they are idealistic and even naïve about the future. We know that they stand to be disappointed, but we are also very glad that they have the vision and the idealism in their eyes, and we are glad that our own adult cynicism hasn't yet corroded their ambitions.

Two things remain to be said.

1. First, we must never water down our faith in justice and peace, our faith that things can work out in the way God wants them to work out. To do that is to deny the justice and peace which we believe is at the heart of God. It is a form of denial of God to lose heart, to let our hopes die out completely, to despair. No, we are those for whom Easter is always possible, always to be expected and always God's will.
2. Secondly, we will never bring about the justice and peace of God on our own. It is in fact part of our baptismal promise to bring about God's justice and peace and we are called by God to share in this work - share it with God and share it with each other - by our lives together in this church and at home, and at work, and in the wider community.

As the Winter Festivals come up this year, we will be invited to ponder this ever more deeply:

- * All Saintside: we will focus on the reality of death and suffering of the martyrs but also remember the saints who achieved their greatness through a patient application of their Christian faith. We must remember that we can achieve sainthood with God's help. It is not the achievement of superhumans, but of ordinary Christians drawn into God's reality by grace.
- Advent reminds us that we are responsible to God for our lives, and we will have to answer for ourselves in the day of judgement.
- At Christmas will sing about Peace on earth as though it were a present reality.
- At Epiphany, we hear of the manifestation of godhead in the world and respond to it with lives of faith.
- At Candlemas, we face up to the reality of suffering and death which life always bring us.

Justice and Peace are the not just the will of God, but the quality of God, and we as Christian people still long and work for them, even in the darkest time.

IF
YOU
WANT
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WORK
FOR
JUSTICE
PAUL G