



## Advent 2 2019

Resources: A N Wilson, The Book of the People. The Jesus Story Book Bible. #Advent-ure flyer. Compline booklets

Advent is a good time for count downs. I have my Harry Potter Advent calendar at home, but my count down today is 4, 3, 2, 1.

4 Sundays in Advent. The traditional themes for each being the four last things: heaven, hell, death and judgement. We're reminded that Advent is not simply waiting for Christmas, but expectantly living towards the coming of Christ for the Second time, to bring this world to its close.

“And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.” [The Last Battle, C S Lewis]

4 – the 4 last things. In Advent ‘The end is where we start from’ [Little Gidding, Eliot].

3 – a three-legged stool. The psalms as translated in the Book of Common Prayer speak wonderfully of the ‘stool of wickedness’. But we won't dwell on all the comic potential there. I mean a three-legged stool.

For families the three-legged stool is home, church and school. There will be a different third leg for others, it could be work, or friendship or a combination of things. But if we are not growing in faith together, in our Christian discipleship and witness at home, and church and school or work or whatever then, reasonably, we cannot expect our faith to last or grow. The Sunday Eucharist is a little over 1.5% of our life each week. If we aren't sharing faith, helping each other to nurture our relationship with God in prayer, wallowing in Scriptures, Gossiping the Gospel at home, and plugging back into God's grace through midweek Eucharists at Spiritual Gym or weds or Friday here – or a church

nearer home or work. If Sunday Church is a stand alone visitor in our lives, God will be a visitor – rather than our deep in-dwelling home. Time and again, experience teaches us that home, and church and school (or work, or friends): All three need to be places where faith in Jesus and hope and love are practically being nourished and shared if we are to be Christians for life.

4 Last things

3-legged stool of Christian life.

2 This is the second Sunday of Advent. Archbishop Cranmer's wonderful Collect for today speaks of the Holy Scriptures and their place in our lives – 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them'. These texts, ancient and ever-new, are a great generous river for us to swim in. They mustn't be an occasional splash (a half heard reading in church) or we will dry up and wither. We mustn't consume them, we must wallow in them, be held and carried through life by them – like a great river.

For children I heartily recommend this: The Jesus Story Book Bible. My favourite family resource. Make sure it gets thread-bare with use – why not make one midweek dinner or breakfast time when you share and discuss and enjoy a story from here together.

There are also little night prayer booklets available for you to take and use at bedtime, and with Graces before mealtimes and other prayers to put God at the heart of our homes where He belongs.

For adults and teens: Try this – A N Wilson, the Book of the People. It's great. And then be inspired to swim in the Bible in some form midweek. The Bible in a year, a collection of daily quotations – There are some really good phone apps for use on the commute, or podcasts. Our own #Advent-ure of course, but for the rest of the year too! There's some rubbish ones – find one that works for you!

4 last things

3 legged stool

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent – The Scriptures

1 source and summit.

The Eucharist is described in Christian teaching as the source and summit of our lives.

The Eucharist is a great mystery, without it we are lost.

Week by week you and I gather and say – the first thing we do each week is give thanks. As Christians our lives are shaped and defined by thanksgiving – Eucharisteo. That is a radical thing we do. We say, our primary being and our first response to life each week is to say 'thank you' Eucharisteo.

And so lavish is God's love, that His response to our meagre offering of Bread and Wine, is to return it to us made Divine Food, to fill us with grace. Truly our week must always begin and end at the altar, it is a radical and beautiful and true and life-giving thing to do. And by the grace we receive here, we seek to make our lives out there as generous and lavishly loving as God is here. 1 source and summit. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday encouragement in the Scriptures (A N Wilson and The Jesus Story Book Bible), 3-legged stool without which we will surely tumble, and the end that is our true beginning. I hope something of that helps. My Harry Potter Advent calendar looks a bit inadequate now.