

ADVENT 2024

THE LORD WILL COME



THE
DIOCESE
OF
BLACKBURN

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN LANCASHIRE



PREFACE

As we journey through Advent, a season of anticipation and preparation for Christ's coming, we will be exploring the letters of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. These early writings of the Apostle Paul offer timely wisdom for our spiritual growth during this significant time of the year.

1 Thessalonians, believed to be one of Paul's earliest letters, was written to encourage a young church facing persecution. Paul begins by praising the Thessalonians for their faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. These three virtues beautifully align with the spirit of Advent, as we reflect on our faith, experience God's love through the gift of His Son, and hold onto the hope of Christ's return.

Throughout the letter, Paul emphasises living a life that pleases God. He encourages the believers to grow in love for one another, to lead quiet and hardworking lives, and to maintain purity in personal relationships. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, these teachings remind us to focus on holy living and loving relationships.

A significant theme in 1 Thessalonians is the return of Christ. Paul reassures the believers about those who have died in Christ, explaining that they will rise first when Jesus comes again. He urges the church to stay alert and sober, living as children of light. During Advent, we too are called to be watchful and ready for Christ's coming.

2 Thessalonians, likely written very shortly after the first letter, addresses some misunderstandings about the Lord's return. Some believers, thinking Christ's return was imminent, had stopped working and were living idly. Paul corrects this misconception, encouraging the Thessalonians to continue their daily work and responsibilities while maintaining their faith.

In this second letter, Paul also comforts the church amidst ongoing persecution. He assures them that God will bring justice and relief when Christ returns. This message of hope resonates with us during Advent as we look forward to the peace and justice that Christ's kingdom will bring.

Both letters emphasise the importance of standing firm in faith, growing in love, and persevering through challenges. Paul's words remind us that our hope in Christ should shape how we live each day, not just during the Advent season.

As we reflect on these letters during Advent, let's be inspired by the Thessalonians' faith, challenged to live holy lives, comforted by the promise of Christ's return, and encouraged to persevere in our faith journey. May this Advent season be a time of renewed faith, deepened love, and steadfast hope as we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth and anticipate His glorious return.

The Revd Mark Bradford, Vicar, St Thomas' Church, Lancaster

CONTENTS

WEEK 1

Starting Sunday 1st December ...6

WEEK 2

Starting Sunday 8th December ...13

WEEK 3

Starting Sunday 15th December ...20

WEEK 4

Starting Sunday 22nd December ...27

CHRISTMAS DAY

Wednesday 25th December ...31

WHAT'S NEXT?

Further resources ...32

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

'we always thank God for all of you'
1 Thessalonians 1:2

In today's world we're often called to sum up people and places. On social media profiles we describe ourselves in a few words; on our church websites we do the same for our congregations. I wonder how you would sum up your church in a line?

The church in Thessalonica was a church plant (recorded in Acts 17). The rhythm of the Gospel in church planting is blessing and opposition, but the encouragement for Paul was that despite their suffering the message of the Gospel was received with joy. The dominant theme of the letter is thanksgiving: *'we always thank God for all of you'* (v.2).

Paul reflects on a church and in summary amazingly characterises them with faith, hope and love: *'We continually remember before our God your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by our hope in our Lord Jesus Christ'* (v.3). The mark of this church is faith, hope, and love. This is what stands out in Paul's mind as he thinks of this church. Faith is directed towards God, love towards each other, and hope towards the future, in particular the return of Christ. Every Christian is a believer and a hoper; hope is rooted in theology. I know Jesus Christ is returning, so I have a certain hope. I can be an optimist or a pessimist, but I have a certain hope.

Faith, hope and love are productive. They sound abstract, but they have concrete, practical results. True faith in God inspires good works: *'Faith without works is also dead'* (James 2:26); *'be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves'* (James 1:22). True love for people inspires working for people and standing by them in times of testing, otherwise love degenerates into sentimentality. True hope in the return of Christ leads to endurance, particularly in the face of opposition and suffering. Calvin called this verse a brief definition of true Christianity: *'work produced by faith, labour prompted by love, endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ'* (1 Thess. 1:3 (NIV)).

Today we enter the season of Advent, joining in the anticipation of when Christ will return. May our faith in God inspire good works, may our love for people inspire us to encourage others, and may our hope in the return of Christ inspire endurance.

The Rt Revd Tony Porter, Honorary Assistant Bishop.

MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

'For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you.' **1 Thessalonians 1:4**

In her latest album Taylor Swift sings about a brief romance which lasted a fortnight but has forever shaped her life. He has moved on and married someone else, she is still in love with him, culminating in her singing, "And I love you. It's ruining my life."

I wonder if secretly many of us feel that way with God. We were keen in our early days with Jesus but have since come to wonder if He still loves us. Now we live in the pain of following Him daily, feeling like an unappreciated spouse for a lover who has jilted us at the altar.

The Christians in Thessalonica may have been feeling something of this. We read in Acts 17 that St. Paul had come with the good news of Jesus but had been forced to flee and had never returned to visit them. Had these Christians been his latest love and now he had jilted them? Did God really love them or was it all a fortnight fling?

It is into this heartache that St. Paul gives them the engagement ring of God's assured love. *'We know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you'* (v.4). Are there any more precious words that a wife or husband can speak to their beloved than, 'I have chosen you.' It is what we mean when we say, 'I love you.' We deeply desire to spend all our lives enjoying that person, and no other.

God says to you, 'I have chosen you.' With all our flaws and in all our messiness, He chose us. He surely calls us to turn from our idols and follow His ways, but He chose us not because we loved Him, but because He loved us.

If you struggle to know the love of God in your life, spend this Advent remembering the coming of Jesus. He who loved us so much, that despite our sin He left the comfort of Heaven for the agony of a Cross. That is the engagement ring He gives you because He has chosen you.

LET US PRAY

Father, thank You that You have chosen me. May I deeply feel the love that You have for me. Amen.

The Revd Lloyd Etheridge, Assistant Curate, St Andrew's, Leyland.

TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
2: 1-6

'Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.'
1 Thessalonians 2:4

'Why are you doing this?' Every now and then, as a parish vicar, someone will ask me this. They genuinely want to know what has caused me to give my life to the call of God in this way. It's a question, however, for anyone who counts themselves a follower of Christ. Why are you doing this? Why do you seek to share the love of God? Why do you speak of Jesus to people who may not know Him? Why do you invite others to church? Why do you give your precious time to clean the church or do the accounts? Why do you sit with those who are grieving? Why do you offer to pray with others? Why do you give sacrificially to God? Why are you doing this?

This question was being answered nearly two thousand years ago, by the Apostle Paul in today's passage. When he preached about Jesus' saving love and sacrifice, it was hard for outsiders to understand why on earth he kept going in spite of fierce opposition. Here he explains; he did it not to make money, or trick others, it was simply to please God. He had no other motive. His words and his actions were never about pleasing others, but only for God. How easy it would be to give up when others opposed him. Instead he kept going, with his eyes on the crucified Saviour, and his heart committed to his Heavenly Father. He was doing this for an audience of One.


Why are you doing this? As our society increasingly doesn't understand or doesn't know about what it means to follow Jesus, we may be misunderstood. As we speak His truth in love, we may face opposition. At times we may have to admit that what we want most is the approval or admiration of others. Perhaps today, as we reflect on the question, 'why are you doing this?', we can ask God to remind us or help us to discover that all we do and say is simply for an audience of One.

LET US PRAY

Lord God, as we prepare for Your coming, keep us always faithful to our calling, that everything we do and say would be done for love of You alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Revd Helen Scamman, Vicar, St Paul's, Caton with Littledale.

WEDNESDAY 4TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
2:7-12

'So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.'
1 Thessalonians 2:8

When I arrived in Colne as Rector of Saint Bartholomew and Holy Trinity, I received many messages of encouragement. One particularly stood out, from a priest who had served in Colne from 2009-2012. He arrived after a period of severe depression, and he wrote: 'I still miss Colne and its lovely people more than anywhere I've been. They literally loved me better.'

This has remained with me over the past three years and become evident, as I have witnessed the power of a church who loves those who Christ calls home. I've seen people healed and transformed by God's gift of salvation, but it's taken the love of a church to help them to 'take-hold' of their new status, as a beloved child of God. Deep care and affection for God's people is the identity of a 'Spirit-filled' Church.

We can be tempted to subscribe to a very individualistic faith, but biblical salvation always looks like 'new-life' in a new family, the family of God. Paul shows this through his words of tenderness, affection and commitment to the Thessalonians. His brothers and sisters, beloved by God. (See vv. 7,8, & 12 for examples).

Paul uses familial terms here: mother, father, brother, and sister because Church at its best feels like a family, a place where love abounds. As a father of three daughters, I pray for my children to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, but I also pray that they will love His church dearly.

LET US PRAY

Who can you pray this for?

I pray that our church feels like home to them. I pray those people will be to them a family who loves them through every stage and situation of life. I pray they feel safe, welcome and known by the members of our church, brothers and sisters in Christ. And above all, I pray that the church's love will witness to the greatest love, the love of a Saviour, Jesus Christ the hope of the world.

The Revd Alex Oehring, Rector of Colne, St Bartholomew and Holy Trinity.

THURSDAY 5TH DECEMBER

READ **1 Thessalonians** **2:13-16**

'We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.'
1 Thessalonians 2:13

Imagine living near Jerusalem in Jesus' day and passing Him enough times to know His face. Imagine learning a couple of years later that it had turned out that man was actually the Son of God and He changed the lives of all He touched or ministered to. I would be so gutted that I hadn't dropped everything to be around Him all the time! But how could I have known? He looked just like any of us.

Paul is giving thanks that the believers in Thessalonica took his words about Jesus as the message of life. These were Gentiles who had a completely different framework for explaining how everything had come into being and what the gods were about. Somehow the story and the witness of Paul and Timothy, and the work of the Holy Spirit, convinced them that this was in fact the truth about the Most High God and it had an urgent demand on their lives. They took the word of God to heart and it started transforming them. The life of their community had already started resembling the way of Christ and His first followers, even to the point of suffering.

How do we recognise the voice of God, and tell it from all the other competing voices? If we manage to avoid the distractions of consumerism and pressure about perfect celebrations, Advent and Christmas are a time when we can focus on God's living Word coming in the midst of us. It's become cosy and familiar, but we are invited to respond to so much more than a sentimental image on a Christmas card. God's incarnate presence has been in the world since creation and His fingerprints are all over everything, but in Jesus, God wants to show us that He actually shares our reality and invites us to share His.

This is the invitation we don't want to pass by. This is the time to drop everything else! Will you become an imitator of the Thessalonians and let your life be completely changed by God's words of life for you?

**LET US
PRAY**

Loving God, create in me an open heart to surrender more completely to Your transforming work in me. Amen.

The Revd Anna Walker Director of Whalley Abbey.

FRIDAY 6TH DECEMBER

READ **1 Thessalonians** **2:17-20**

'Is it not you?'
1 Thessalonians 2:19

'Things like this don't happen around here. This is a quiet neighbourhood.' How often do you hear that comment made when there is a disaster being reported on TV, and local views are sought? Just as likely to be heard, when we are walking our Red Setter, is the comment 'You don't see many of those around these days...'

Well, in downtown Thessalonica, there had been several such momentous happenings to rock the locals. The 'great awakening' in people's hearts as Paul's example and delivery of the gospel message had made God's presence real and fruitful in the lives of amazed simple folk, going on to discover more about God's power and reality day by day. Great news! Such a refreshing community to belong to. But why the aggro from the religious guys? What was the problem?

But it got worse and worse, and Paul and his team had to be smuggled out. What do we do now they must have thought? Have we failed? Will we see Paul again? From all accounts, the fire that Paul had started in the lives of this new church group carried on brightly, and they continued to thrive, no doubt feeling their way forward, but finding the transforming power from God for themselves. Growing in maturity and wisdom, and seeing others added, as they were themselves. Were they getting it right?

Which is where this little paragraph exploded like honey into their consciousness! *'Is it not you?'* (v.19). Not really a question, but a tremendous affirmation about the quality of their love for God, and how that continues to enable Paul to rejoice and take heart. Wow!

The Christian path is, arguably, best tread carefully and prayerfully, not brashly or boastfully, but none-the-less, quietly triumphantly – gloriously, indeed. The religious guys, no doubt, were still fuming, but Paul was letting them know the angels were dancing. Things like this happen around everywhere, where God's spirit is welcome. Rejoice!

**The Revd Stef Dnistrianskyj, St James the Great,
Wrightington with Heskin.**

SATURDAY 7TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
3:1-5

'And we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith.'
1 Thessalonians 3:2

We know the saying, 'A trouble shared is a trouble halved.' How often have we wrestled with a difficult decision or found ourselves in a situation, not knowing how to resolve the issue only to discover when we speak to family, a trusted friend, a colleague, that they can look at it with fresh eyes. At this moment we are both strengthened and encouraged to take a next step or find a way forward. They may have faced a similar issue and so bring the benefit of experience, or just provide a listening ear while we work through the problem ourselves.

Paul was concerned for the people of Thessalonica. As he left them, new in the faith, persecution began. He could not return there, so instead sends Timothy, a trusted companion, a 'co-worker for God' (v.2), to strengthen and encourage the people in their tender faith. Paul had warned them of what might happen and fears that like the seed that fell on rocky ground from the parable Jesus told in Matthew 13, they would wither and fall away in the face of persecution. If this happened, if the tempter, exploited this situation, then all Paul's work with them had been in vain. Being a follower of Christ, as the Thessalonians discovered quickly, does not make us immune to difficult times, to the trials and tribulations that life can bring. However, by placing our trust in Jesus, by creating a sure foundation beneath our feet then we are given the strength and the help we need to get through them, as they were.

As Paul sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians, so during the season of Advent we wait and watch for our Lord Jesus coming, sent by God for our salvation. As Timothy was sent out of love for the people, so Jesus is the ultimate symbol of God's love for us. So as we watch for this gift of love coming into our world, let us be aware of His presence and all those the Lord sends to guide and help us through the ups and downs of our journey through life.

The Revd Canon Fleur Green, Vicar, St John the Baptist, Broughton.

WEEK 2 - SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

 **READ**
1 Thessalonian
3:6-10

'For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord.' **1 Thessalonians 3:8**

God calls us in Jesus to be part of the one body. As one body we are interconnected with each other, and it is vital to build each other's faith stronger in Christ through love, prayer, care, and spiritual support. Today's reading encourages us to grow together as the one body of Christ. Let us reflect on three points in this passage.

First, relationships matter: Paul focusses on relationships with fellow believers and their spiritual needs. Both Paul and the Thessalonians long to see each other (v.6). Although Paul is physically away from the Thessalonians, he is fully engaged with them emotionally and spiritually. He remains connected to them with Jesus' love, care and concern to help them grow stronger in faith. As followers of Jesus, we are to remain connected and build relationships with fellow believers to strengthen each other in faith.

Second, mutual encouragement: Paul in his distress and persecution is comforted and encouraged by hearing the good news of the Thessalonians' faith and love (vv.6,8). Afflictions and persecution have not deterred the Thessalonians' faith in Christ. Likewise, Paul is encouraging the them through love, care and providing spiritual support. Seeing each other standing firm in the Lord even in trials and troubles is comforting and encouraging. Do we mutually encourage each other through love, care, and spiritual support to stand firm in the Lord?

Third, cross-cultural fellowship: Paul's background is Jewish, but the Thessalonians are mainly from a pagan background yet they are connected by the love of Christ. They encourage each other and long to see each other face to face (vv.6,7,10). The Gospel of Jesus crosses any barriers, knitting diverse cultures together in faith and love to build the Church. As believers we are called to have fellowship with those from diverse cultural backgrounds in our communities. Have we ever taken any steps to welcome and embrace them with the love of Christ? Paul teaches us to have rich cross-cultural fellowship, which is the beauty of the one body of Christ.

**LET US
PRAY**

May God help us to remain connected with each other through love, prayer, care, and sharing the gospel to grow stronger in faith and fellowship. Amen.

The Revd Munawar Din, Vicar of St Luke's, Brierfield & St Cuthbert's, Burnley.

MONDAY 9TH DECEMBER

READ **1 Thessalonians 3:11-13**

'And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.'
1 Thessalonians 3:12

Mother Theresa, perhaps one of the greatest modern examples of selfless love, said 'I'm a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.' A theme within many of Paul's letters is that of unity within the fellowship of believers. Time and again, he encourages the followers of Christ's teaching to work in harmony together; to set aside differences of gender, race and social status so that they become an example of the unifying love of Christ. Here we see Paul exhorting the believers in Thessalonica to be unified in fellowship during a time of persecution and terror for their lives; this time through love.

There are four types of love in this short passage: Firstly, the corporate love that the Thessalonians feel for themselves as a fellowship of believers, to support one another during this time of great trial and grief. Secondly, the love that Paul and Timothy, the 'we' in the passage, send as they pray for the Thessalonians. Thirdly, and perhaps most difficult of all, the love that the believers must feel for everyone, yes, even those who persecute them. Fourthly, the love that God sends through His Holy Spirit to the believers, a love Paul prays will increase and abound. The word abound means to increase to overflowing, an extravagant love that never stops. God's generous and unending love gives strength to the believers to support one another, and to face their persecutors.

These four types of love are just as relevant to us today as they were in Paul's time. God's love abounds in us and we are called to share that love with others. We may not be experiencing persecution ourselves but, like Paul and Timothy, we pray in love for our fellow persecuted Christians in countries like Sudan. Many in our congregations will be feeling grief, despair and possibly fear in their lives, and we are called to love and support them in Christian fellowship. Those outside the church may sneer at our faith, or show disinterest and apathy. We are called to love and pray for them regardless. So, let us share that prayer of Paul today.

LET US PRAY

Lord, let Your love increase and abound in me, that I may be the pencil that shares Your love letter with others. Amen.

Jen Read, Senior Church Buildings Officer and Licensed Lay Minister.

TUESDAY 10TH DECEMBER

READ **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**

'For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness.' **1 Thessalonians 4:7**

I'm attending a wedding soon. When the invitation came it said that we were encouraged to wear cocktail attire. Now, for those of us of a certain age that might evoke the wrong idea. Cocktail used to be formal dress. Now it actually means something different it means relatively-informal-formal if you see what I mean. Ideas, culture and language changes, but the key message today is that some things never do for Christians.

Paul's exhortation to the church in Thessalonica is that certain ideals will never be negotiable for Christians. Like us the Thessalonians were living in a culture with a number of ideas around most things including human relationships. Paul reminds them there can only be one standard for a Christian community, which is starting to form its identity. Committed relationships around sexual monogamy are the mark of holiness, he reminds them.

Elsewhere, biblical imagery around Christ and His Church uses the image of the marriage relationship and Paul is keen to remind the new church of these standards. He is also preparing them for the New Age in which Christ will return and Paul exhorts them to be prepared for that.

Today, in our small part of the world, it is apparent that the whole subject of relationships is a matter for scrutiny. This means, even within the Church there is substantial debate around relationships and what is holy. However, it is very clear from Scripture today that it is hard to ever imagine that we would ever see anything as acceptable other than two people committing to one another in a way which to quote the marriage service 'strengthens community'.

Today, we pray for all those who are in such relationships. If we are married, we pray for ourselves that we will be good spouses. We may know of people whose relationship is struggling, and we pray for them. May we also celebrate those who through their marriage relationships over many years have borne witness to the true fruit of what is possible in Christ.

The Venerable David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster.

WEDNESDAY 11TH DECEMBER

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

'But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you' 1 Thessalonians 4:10b-11

In September, nations worldwide gathered for the United Nations General Assembly's 2024 session, and the focus on advancing peace, sustainable development, and human dignity took centre stage. The 'Pact for the Future' called for commitments to make the world more peaceful, sustainable, and inclusive. Yet, amidst these global efforts, conflict and unrest persist, spilling beyond borders and affecting countless lives. In this context, the words of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians resonate with profound urgency.

Paul's exhortation calls for quiet dignity in the ordinary tasks of life. It is not merely a warning against isolation but a divine invitation to embrace harmonious living by centring our hearts on our unique calling. Echoing this wisdom, Jesus proclaimed love, forgiveness, and reconciliation as pathways to peace. These values are universally resonant, transcending cultures and boundaries and inviting everyone into a shared community of faith and hope.

Over two millennia have passed since Jesus' birth, yet the struggle for peace—both internal and external—remains a testament to its enduring nature. The challenge of embodying love within and around us has not diminished. In his book 'Mere Christianity' C.S. Lewis gently reminds us that without Christ 'hope may appear as a distant glimpse, a fleeting shadow. Yet, with Christ, our hope transforms into a steadfast and radiant light that shines within each of us.' We still wrestle with embracing Christ's peace—a peace that doesn't merely advocate the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, love, and a tranquil spirit amidst life's trials.

Envision a world united in this divine cause during Advent as we celebrate and honour Jesus' miraculous birth. Picture a realm where boundaries dissolve, where denominations, races, ethnicities, classes, and religions no longer divide us.

Herein lies the challenge and joy of Advent: to make the birth of Christ the cornerstone of peace. Let this time of waiting be a transformative journey towards living out the peace of Christ in a world that so desperately needs it. In leading quiet, sincere lives, the path to peace, though strewn with challenges, becomes more evident, a testament that, indeed, in Christ, lies the true essence of peace. Amen.

The Revd Cornelius Ashgar, Assistant Curate, St Laurence's & St Peter's, Chorley.

THURSDAY 12TH DECEMBER

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

'Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.'
1 Thessalonians 4:17

I still remember the first time I turned to this passage during a pastoral visit. I was a young curate at Lancaster Priory and the widow I was visiting was aching with grief. I read this passage because it explains how the grief of a Christian is so different from the grief of someone who has no faith. Grief is still real and painful, but as Christians we have a sure hope of life after death because of the resurrection of Jesus. 'Together with them' in verse 17 is one of the clearest promises in the New Testament that we shall be reunited with those who have died in faith when Christ returns.

The second part of this verse can sometimes be misunderstood. Some have suggested that when Paul writes of being 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air', he means that when Jesus returns He won't actually come to earth but simply hover in the sky and gather the believers away from the earth.

This odd idea completely missed the point. Paul is referring to the Roman way in which the leading citizens of a city would come out of the city with trumpets to meet an approaching emperor on a state visit and then escort him on the last part of his journey into the city. Paul is saying that when Jesus returns to earth as King it will be like that, living and departed believers will gather together in the clouds (which in Scripture signify the presence of God) and escort King Jesus back to earth to claim His kingdom. Then God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

What an encouraging Advent hope! However violent and worrying the news may be, we know for certain that God will not abandon the world. Jesus will come again to rule on earth as King, all evil will be banished from this beautiful world, and we shall be reunited with those whom we love and see no longer.

Therefore let our prayer today be, *'Maranatha! Even so, come Lord Jesus!'*

The Venerable Mark Ireland, Archdeacon of Blackburn.

FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
5:1-11

'But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief.'
1 Thessalonians 5:4

Do you have a favourite movie that you can watch over and over? For a long time, our family's favourite was Disney's 'Frozen 2'. On rainy Saturday afternoons, it was always the go-to choice, capturing my kids' imaginations like no other film. The plot twists weren't surprises—they knew the story inside out, everyone was expected to get involved in the songs—whether you wanted to or not!

In today's passage, Paul talks to the Thessalonian church about something they already know: Jesus will come back, and when He does, He will make right the wrongs, the evil, we see in the world and feel in our lives. Darkness is all around us. Paul reminds us not to give in to the temptations and evil influences around us, but to live differently, in the light of Jesus, as His people, looking forward to His return. Waiting for Jesus' return isn't a passive activity; it requires us to actively pursue holiness in readiness for His return. To wear faith and love and the hope of our salvation.

I sometimes wonder if time has caused my watchfulness to falter and I'm challenged by this passage to consider what my life might look like if I knew His return would happen this Advent? How much have I prioritised 'blending in' that I am slightly guilty of dozing on the job? Reading this passage reminds us that Jesus WILL return and we ought to look forward to it because we know He will bring the justice that we crave and as followers of Jesus, we can participate in His story.


As we anticipate Christmas we also anticipate Christ's Second Coming. We don't know when that will be but, just like my family with 'Frozen 2', because we can know what's coming next, we can join in with the story. It's a story that involves participation, so, along with our church family, let's immerse ourselves in it – let's encourage each other to hum, to sing, and even dare to dance!

**LET US
PRAY**

Lord, help me to delight and join in with Your gospel story. Help me to be 'self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet' as we wait in readiness for Your return. Amen.

Sarah Marston, Making Disciples Coordinator.

SATURDAY 14TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
5:12-15

'Be at peace among yourselves.'
1 Thessalonians 5:13

As a child, one of my favourite toys was my Lego Medieval Castle. I made sure it ran like clockwork: the knights were all assigned areas of the castle to protect, the Lord and Lady treated their subjects well, and on the odd occasion when anybody didn't pull their weight, I sent them to the dark dungeon. It was a place of harmony.

The words we read from Paul today, are a charge in how to live harmonious Christian lives: respect those in authority, get along with one another, offer support to those who need it. We are called to be team players in God's Kingdom, striving to be at peace with creation, one another and ourselves.

We seek to lead lives which run smoothly and are peaceful. All too often though, our best laid plans go awry. The news headlines demonstrate how wrong things are in the world. Many of us will identify amongst our own families and friends, relationships and situations in need of healing and reconciliation.

In Advent, we prepare for the coming of the Prince of Peace. We receive the assurance that God's light and love will overcome all darkness and evil. Are there people or situations on your heart, in need of the peace of Christ this Advent and Christmas? Maybe you are feeling overwhelmed by the sheer hustle and bustle of this time of year.

Paul wills us to be at peace. As we prepare to greet the Christ Child, find time to pray for God's Heavenly peace; that all humanity will live in harmony, doing good to one another and to all. To conclude today's devotion, a familiar blessing based on today's scripture reading:

**LET US
PRAY**

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

The Revd Canon Tracy Charnock, Vicar, Holy Trinity & St Peter, South Shore.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

 **READ**
1 Thessalonian
5:16-22

' Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.'
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Hold on to what is good..

'When Robert Louis Stevenson was a young child, he was sick much of the time. He couldn't go out and play like the other children so he spent a lot of time watching at the window. One evening he sat and watched as a man came down the street lighting the gas lamps. His nurse said to him, "What are you doing?" "I'm watching the man knock holes in the darkness," he replied.'

For us, as Christians, we believe that Jesus was and is, the One, who knocked holes in the darkness. He is the Light of the World who stepped down into darkness, to bring His light and love.

In one of our Eucharistic prayers (D) it says this:

*To the darkness Jesus came as your light.
With signs of faith and words of hope
he touched the untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.*

What amazing words. This was Jesus, He came with signs of faith so that we might believe; He gave—and He still gives—words of hope so that we may be encouraged and inspired; He touched people with love so that we might share that love with others; He freed us from our sin so that we might free others with love. He came to be our light, to shine on us and through us and to enable us to be people of light.

So as we continue our journey through Advent let our spirit not be quenched, but rather let it be thirsty – for the Light of the World, the One promised by the prophets. Let our hearts rejoice as we remember again His coming into the world and let us pray continually that lives may be touched and changed by the One born to be King.

The Revd Paul Robinson, Vicar, St Ambrose, Leyland.

MONDAY 16TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
1 Thessalonians
5:23-28

'May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'
1 Thessalonians 5:23

As a General Practitioner, I often see people seeking healing, yearning for relief that sometimes feels ever out of reach. Appointments are rushed, treatment is delayed, and medicines can fall short. Yet, Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 offer a vision of comprehensive restoration.

So, considering Paul's words, let's see what it means to be truly healed—more than skin deep, more than physical ailments removed. Advent invites us to reflect on the longing, the waiting, and the anticipation, not just of Christmas joy but also the profound hope of Christ's return. This is a time to turn our hearts towards God's infinite capacity for healing, encompassing our physical bodies, fragile hearts, and wandering spirits.

In the hustle of medical treatment, we sometimes overlook our spiritual wellness. Spiritual vulnerability arises when we allow life's pressures to overshadow God's peace. We neglect to feed our spirits, leaving them malnourished amidst life's struggles. Yet, healing in Jesus is not a hurried affair or a mere transaction; it's a lifelong journey of daily surrendering our burdens. Imagine Jesus, the Great Physician, walking with us. He listens, knows the depths of our afflictions and the struggles of our hearts, and offers us the balm of His peace. In Him, we find rest. His peace transcends our understanding and tranquillity, which settles the spirit even when the world stirs around us. It's available, not on an appointment basis, but at every moment we call out to Him.

While rejoicing over the wondrous birth of our Saviour, let us draw back to the root of our spiritual health: a vibrant, living relationship with Christ. Reconnect through prayer, Scripture, and the stillness that welcomes His presence. Let His peace permeate our souls, aligning our spirits, souls, and bodies to His will. Share this peace with those around us. In doing so, we prepare ourselves to welcome Christ anew and embrace His sanctifying grace together.

May we find in these Advent days a renewal that is not just seasonal but eternal, a peace that bears witness to Christ's healing love, here and now, until He comes again.

Dr Shumaila Safdar, Lay-member of St Laurence's, Chorley.

TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER



READ 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

'Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.'

2 Thessalonians 1:4

The watching and waiting of Advent can often be a reminder of those periods of waiting upon the Lord in our own spiritual lives. When we go through a season of uncertainty, it can be unsettling. There are many situations where we may be trying to see the hand of God in our lives, but His presence may not seem very clear. Perhaps we are very sick or waiting for test results from doctors. There may be a period of economic uncertainty, redundancy, unemployment, or waiting for the results of a job application. Maybe we are trying to discern God's will for a marriage partner, but we just haven't met the right person yet. Perhaps a marriage, family relationship or friendship has become strained or broken down. These and many other experiences may cause us to question our walk with God. Though doubt and uncertainty may overwhelm us, remember there are often people going through much worse. We can pray for them.

The early Church in Thessalonica was undergoing very difficult times. Paul himself knew great suffering and struggles, but he wrote to his fellow Christians in Thessalonica because he greatly loved them. Paul wanted to encourage and support his brothers and sisters who were undergoing persecution and suffering. He wanted to ensure that these Thessalonian Christians, who were young in their faith, continued to grow in faith, despite the difficulties and challenges that they faced.

Most of us are fortunate not to face the same level of persecution and suffering of those early Thessalonians, but we will experience trials and disappointments. Our faith may be challenged, and cause us to question where God is and what He intends for us. Prayer helps us to find God's peace and purpose in our struggles, and to be mindful of the needs of others. As we wait upon the Lord for the answers we seek, may we pray for the healing and peace of others who are struggling and be inspired by their faith and courage.

The Revd Marc Wolverson, Vicar, St James', Leyland.

WEDNESDAY 18TH DECEMBER



READ 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

'This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.'

2 Thessalonians 1:5

You might think that as a person who struggles with patience the waiting of Advent would be difficult for me, but no, it is not. That is because there are two different kinds of waiting: the passive and the active.

I hate the passive waiting of queuing. Tarleton's Community Facebook page was full of frustration when back at the end of September temporary traffic lights at Bank Bridge added up to two hours to some people's commute.

The waiting of Advent is a very active waiting. It is a getting oneself ready for the coming of Christ. We are getting ready to mark His birth at Bethlehem two thousand years ago, and to prepare for His second coming. Sadly, Advent can become an overactive time of preparing physically for the celebrations of Christmas. More time, effort and money goes in to preparing the Christmas Day Lunch, than a week's worth of meals at other times in the year. Then there is all the present buying, which can be all consuming.

The preparing I am talking about is spiritual preparing. One of the ancient themes of the Advent Season are the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. As we prepare this Advent there is the need to prepare for Judgment Day. When that day comes are we able to say to God 'I did my best'. However, I want to distinguish between judgment and punishment. God's judgment may seem to be harsh, but it is not retributive. God is a merciful God. God will know, respect and reward when we have tried and failed rather than not tried at all.

God's merciful judgment will in the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary involve casting down of the mighty and lifting up of the lowly (Luke 1:52). So, He will correct the wrongs as St Paul tells the early Christians in Thessalonica, in today's passage.

So, this Advent, I urge you to commit to setting time aside with God in prayer and Bible study, so you can know Him better...and learn from him how to live a more Holy life.

The Revd Canon Mark Soady, Rector of Rufford & Tareyton.

THURSDAY 19TH DECEMBER

READ **2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**

'To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith,'
2 Thessalonians 1:11

My husband is a self-confessed last-minute gift shopper. I can guarantee that as you read today's devotional, he will not have started any form of Christmas preparations and will instead be waiting for a Christmas Eve dash! This is partly my fault as I never give him any clue of a gift I would like, so leave him in the uncertain territory of having to choose a gift without guidance. Often this gift (after much guilt and apologising on my behalf) ends up being returned.

Paul however, never left the Thessalonians feeling uncertain about what they needed. He made it clear that they could rely unwaveringly on the gift of prayer and that this gift would be a constant, ceaseless, ever-giving 'present'. If there was one gift the Thessalonians desperately needed at this time of persecution and hardship, it was prayer to strengthen their resolve and give them light in a time of darkness. Paul makes it clear that he understood that times were difficult for them, yet encourages them to focus on God's calling in their lives and to hold steadfast to their faith rather than looking inwards or feel that these hard times were too much to bear.

Sometimes in the business (or busyness) of our day-to-day lives we can lose sight of God's calling. There is so much anticipation and so much to prepare that we risk losing sight of God's calling and God's promised inheritance by seeking comfort in distractions. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to trust in the power of prayer; to live honouring God and to grow in faith in Christ.

Perhaps therefore we should rethink our Christmas gift list. Asking for a gift that needs no eleventh-hour panic buying, needs no money, puts no stress on the credit card and will not need returning. It needs no wrapping paper, bow, or gift tag. It is the gift of prayer. Prayer that we live up to our calling as believers; that we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives and that we grow in faith to delight more in Jesus. Now that's one gift that won't be returned in the January sales!

**Victoria Gow, Headteacher,
Balderstone St Leonard's CE Primary & Pre-school.**

FRIDAY 20TH DECEMBER

READ **2 Thessalonians 2:1-5**

'Not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or word or by letter...to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here.'
2 Thessalonians 2:2

In our journey of faith and understanding, we must be open to correcting our misconceptions, just as St. Paul did for the Thessalonians. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, Paul addresses false beliefs that had taken root in the community. He reassures them, saying, *'Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun'* (v.2, NLT). Paul's words remind us of the importance of seeking truth and being willing to learn.

In my years as a teacher, I was acutely aware of the potential to unintentionally reinforce misconceptions. This concern was particularly evident when I taught the book 'Journey to Joburg' by Beverley Naidoo. The story of Naledi and Tiro's 300km trek to Johannesburg could easily perpetuate oversimplified views about poverty in Africa. While their journey reflected real challenges, I recognised the importance of providing a more comprehensive picture. It was crucial for me to go beyond simply teaching the text; I needed to challenge these partial truths and guide my students towards a more nuanced understanding of Africa's diverse realities. I felt a deep responsibility to ensure that my lessons didn't just tell one story, but opened doors to broader, more accurate perspectives of the world.

In our pursuit of equity, diversity, and justice, we must find those who can guide us and affirm our efforts. Yet, we must also remain humble, recognising that the best way to learn is often through our mistakes. As we encounter others' misconceptions, let us respond not with judgment, but with patience and understanding.

St. Paul's message to the Thessalonians serves as a powerful reminder that growth often comes through correction and reassurance. He then urges them, and us, to *'stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter'* (2 Thess. 2:15). This steadfastness, combined with openness to learning, forms the foundation of our spiritual and intellectual development. As we reflect on our own misconceptions and those we encounter in others, let us remember Paul's example. May we approach each day with humility, ready to learn, grow, and gently guide others towards a fuller understanding of God's truth and the complex world He has created.

Iain Parks, Director of Education.

SATURDAY 21ST DECEMBER



READ
**2 Thessalonians
2:6-12**

'And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming.'
2 Thessalonians 2:8

Christian revelation makes a consistent and dramatic use of images we can relate to, and as we come to the Father in Advent, asking for help to make us ready for the coming of His Son, we can begin by rejoicing that the gift of the Church has made it possible to glimpse *'the manifestation of his coming'* (v.8).

Advent calls us to respond generously and courageously to this. At first, we may fear the language of 'annihilation' with its sense of brutality and conflict, and yet the season warns us against domesticating the drama of salvation with words chosen simply because they're less likely to disturb us.

As a penitential season, Advent raises the place of confession as Christ's work of removing sin. This is part of what we mean by annihilation; removing whatever it may be that keeps the coming Christ at a distance. Paul's language of *'with the breath of his mouth'* (v.8) provides continuity with the Lord's encounter after His Resurrection where He breathed on the apostles, making the link with the new creation brought about by the annihilation of sin.

The dramatic images of Thessalonians reveal the urgency with which we need the power of Christ's mercy to conquer evil. His mercy is so overwhelming that it cannot go into retreat, whatever the strength of any enemy or obstacle. God's mercy sets out to accomplish a purpose, waiting to be revealed, but is still possible to glimpse in the liturgy of the Church.

There is a very different creation in Christ already waiting which will 'annihilate' the former by its beauty, perfection and magnificence. So, how do we encounter this? How are we made ready? In the Eucharist we already experience the coming of Christ towards us because there is always an Advent dimension to its celebration. Eucharistic life is an intimate relationship of growth in the life of Jesus and the kingdom He manifests. By this relationship we come to experience something of the Advent hope in the liturgical images of the heavenly banquet—Christ's coming again—and the New Creation. As Christians, we are already partakers in *'the manifestation of his coming'* (v.8) and so we pray that the Coming Christ will make us ready for the fullness of His appearing.

The Revd Guy Jamieson, St Paul's & St Mary's, Nelson.

WEEK 4 - SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



READ
**2 Thessalonians
2:13-17**

'brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught'
2 Thessalonians 2:15

When I was a new parent, I remember being told that when a child was having a tantrum the correct thing to do was to stand firm and don't change your mind. All you had to do was say 'no' just one more time than your child said 'yes'. Sounds simple? Well, they had not met my children, and whilst the theory of only having to say no one more time is true, that was very hard if your child said 'yes' hundreds of times. One of my friends likened standing firm during a child's tantrum, to being hit by a train. In other words impossible to stand still!

Here we have St. Paul telling us to stand firm in our faith and to hold onto that which we have been taught. In other words, we know how to act, we just need to put it into practice and to do so on a consistent basis. But, like dealing with a tantruming child, knowing what to do and actually doing it are two different things. It can be hard to maintain a standard of behaviour when the world around us tries to get us to do something different. When to act in a Christian manner goes against what the rest of society wants us to do.

But, I have to wonder, what an incredible difference it would make to our community, today, if more and more people 'stood firm' in the Christian faith. I believe that every Christian has a part to play in God's mission to the world, not just those who are in church leadership. Standing firm in our faith means we take our faith into our work setting, into our home-life and when we are socialising.

What would it mean for you today to see your workplace, your family and your friends as a mission ground? As a place where 'standing firm in the faith' might get you singled out, or make you look different? If that is the case then rejoice, because those are areas where we can make the most difference. When we stand firm in our faith we witness to others about the incredible love of Jesus and His saving grace.

**LET US
PRAY**

Father, we thank You that You have called us to follow You, help us to stand firm in our faith and to be your light in the dark places of our world. Amen.

The Revd Canon Anne Beverley, Director of Ministry.

MONDAY 23RD DECEMBER

 **READ**
2 Thessalonians
3:1-5

'May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.'
2 Thessalonians 3:5

As St. Paul draws his Second Letter to the Thessalonians towards its close, he asks his readers to pray for protection for his ministry. As he makes this prayer request, Paul paints a beautiful picture of God's Word 'spreading rapidly' [literally 'running'] and '*being glorified*' (v.1). The picture here is of God's Word, like an Olympic athlete, winning the Gold Medal. But Paul also sees that, in this race, God's Word will face competition from other voices, who want airtime and attention for themselves.

As we approach Christmas, this can easily be true in our lives. God's Word can be easily come second, behind the many distractions of the Christmas celebrations. Today's reading invites us to make time to be quiet and to listen to God speak to us in his Word. More generally, our reading invites us to pray that God's Word will 'win the race' and have first place everywhere this Christmastide.

As we read on, St. Paul tells us that when he pictures the Thessalonians, he has '*confidence in the Lord*' (v.4). Paul trusts that the Lord will keep the Thessalonians safe and close to Himself. In our time today with God's Word, here is also a prayer we can make our own – that God will keep us close to Himself throughout the day. May He direct our hearts today to His love and to the steadfastness of Christ.

To speak, as Paul does, of Jesus' steadfastness is to speak of His hope-filled 'staying power' in the face of suffering. Most of all, Christ showed this steadfastness as He suffered for us at the cross.


As we look into the manger this Christmastide, and see the wonder of God having become an infant, so too we look to the cross, where we see the height and depth of God's love for us.

LET US PRAY

Lord God, this Christmas, direct our hearts to the manger and the cross, that there we may see Jesus our Saviour and respond afresh to His love. Amen.

The Rt Revd Joe Kennedy, Bishop of Burnley.

CHRISTMAS EVE TUESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

 **READ**
2 Thessalonians
3:6-13

'We were not idle when we were with you.'
2 Thessalonians 3:7

Tomorrow the Christ-child will be here. God will be born into His world. And the world into which Jesus will be born is a world of work. Joseph, who was given a duty of care for God's own son, was a carpenter. Many artistic depictions of Jesus in His early years imagine Jesus learning the skills of carpentry under Joseph's tuition. Jesus lived and grew up in a world of work and trade.

It is no surprise, therefore, that in the concluding section of his letter Paul talks about work. He has some harsh words for those who are idle and are not making their contribution to the Christian community in Thessalonica. He reminds his audience of his own pattern of hard work (and we know from Acts 18 that Paul was a tentmaker by trade). And he gives some strong advice that those who do not work should not eat. There is no place for laziness in the Christian community.

Why is this all so important to Paul? Because work matters. If Jesus, God with us, grew up in the world of work, then there is a holiness to work. Work is not a necessary evil. It is part of God's plan for our lives. It has a dignity because it means that we can make a contribution to the community rather than being a burden to it.

For many, work means going out and doing a job to earn the income that supports family life. That work is sacred. It contributes to society, it means that we can support the weak and it also provides an opportunity to bear witness to Christ in the workplace. Others are called to other forms of work: that may be bringing up children full-time, volunteering, caring for a family member, hospitality or the vital work of prayer. But Paul reminds us that every member of the Christian community, no matter what their age or status, can make a contribution.

As you prepare to celebrate Jesus being born in to the world of work, why not find some time to reflect on what your contribution to your own Christian community will be in 2025.

LET US PRAY

Father, protect us from idleness and help us to use our gifts to the full, that we might contribute to the work of declaring your Kingdom. Amen.

The Rt Revd Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn.



CHRISTMAS DAY WEDNESDAY 25TH DECEMBER



+ READ
**2 Thessalonians
3:14-18**

'I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.'
2 Thessalonians 3:17

'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, with every Christmas card I write,' goes the Christmas countdown classic. Today the countdown is over. Here we are. Christmas Day. May I wish you and yours a very Happy Christmas. As beautiful as our Advent Devotionals are, the printed word doesn't quite have the same impact, as me writing personally to each one of you.

There's something about the hand-written touch that makes all the difference. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Lancaster, Paul Swarbrick, impressed me mightily with his hand-writing. I emailed him a question about the Lancaster Martyrs, and he replied with a two-sided A4 letter. Hand-written. 'Because I can put more of myself into it'.

If you're a regular reader of the apostle Paul's letters, you will notice that he often grabs the pen off his scribe at the end, to write a greeting in his own hand. And, more often than not, he adds a throwaway line which sums up his entire letter. As we come to the end of his letters to the church in Thessalonica, what is the sum up?

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you' (v. 18).

In these earliest of Paul's letters, his most important hashtag is #Grace. Paul finishes as he starts (1 Thess. 1:1, 2 Thess. 1:2) with grace. When he was taken up to heaven, presumably at the start of his ministry, Paul heard Jesus say: *'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'* (2 Cor. 12:9). A tiny baby, mothered by an unmarried teenager, born amongst the animals because there was no room at the inn... that's God's grace in weakness.

For some of us, today is a joy – unwrapping presents with excited children, singing carols with the angels. For some it may be more of a quiet surrender in the pain – family tensions, empty seat at the table. But whether you celebrate in joy or surrender in weakness – may you know His grace this Christmas Day.

Amen.

The Rt Revd Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster.

WHAT'S NEXT

We really hope you've enjoyed walking through Advent with this booklet. If you're wondering how you can continue with this pattern of daily reading there are a whole host of resources available to you. For ease of access, many resources are now available either online or as apps. A few suggestions are:

DAILY PRAYER

churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer

Daily Prayer is available free as an app or on the Church of England Website and gives complete services for Morning, Evening and Night Prayer in both contemporary (Common Worship) and traditional (Book of Common Prayer) forms.

BIOY

bibleinoneyear.org

With BIOY each day you receive a Psalm or Proverbs reading, a New Testament and an Old Testament reading. It also provides daily audio and written commentary to walk you through each day's reading, to provide fresh understanding of the texts.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

blackburn.anglican.org/bible-study

In addition to these resources there will be regular Quiet Days and Retreats offered by Whalley Abbey: whalleyabbey.org

BIBLE PODLETS

bdeducation.org.uk/podcasts/bible-podlets

Bible Podlets is a Bible study and discussion podcast for primary aged children to do with adults. Each episode has fun games/activities, an engaging Bible reading in the form of a news story, and discussion, with places to pause and talk together about the topic. You can download discussion notes from the resources area of the site.

If you prefer a hard copy resource, Christian bookshops carry a large range of Bible reading material, from daily reading notes to study books on particular themes or books of the Bible.

BISHOP'S BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

Access Bible studies created by Bishop Philip, Bishop Jill, and Bishop Joe, designed for small groups or individual use, directly in the Fruitful App, accessible anytime, anywhere.



Download it now!

- Watch or Listen to the Advent devotionals
- Read or Listen to the integrated bible passage
- Access bonus devotional content
- Bishop's Bible Study Resources for your small group or personal reflection
- Podcasts
- Much More!



'THE LORD HIMSELF WILL COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, WITH A LOUD COMMAND, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL AND WITH THE TRUMPET CALL OF GOD, AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. AFTER THAT, WE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE AND ARE LEFT WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR. AND SO WE WILL BE WITH THE LORD FOREVER. THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS.' 1 THESS. 4:16-18

Cover Image: Two Angels (ca. 1330) by North Italian Painter. Bequest of Edward Fowles, 1971. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection.

Christmas Day Image: The Nativity (1863) by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (d.1898).
Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust.



*All texts in this booklet are taken from the
New Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated*

Designed by Morse-Brown Design

We'd love your feedback on this resource!

