

SERMON: 29 November 2020 – Rev Alistair Cowper

Advent - The Hope in God's Coming

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Isaiah 64:1-9

Mark 13:24-37

O that you would rend the heavens and come down!

Turn us again to yourself.

No eye has seen no ear has heard, a God like you who works for those who wait for him.

In all three readings today, there's a ...

Lamenting of God's absence

Longing for God's presence

Waiting for God's coming

The world waits for a vaccine, a saviour from the destructive effects of Covid 19

How does God respond to our lamenting and our longing?

Like a baby?

God comes in the fragile vulnerability of a new born baby. The baby who becomes a boy who confounds the teachers in the Temple, who becomes a man who heals the sick, a rabbi who teaches in the synagogue, who is beaten and killed; and who rises in glory.

A man who declared that heaven and earth would pass away but his words would never (31).

What other God would act like this?

God coming as a baby who needs us to look after him.

There is an African proverb that says it takes a whole village to raise a child.

God demonstrates our need of each other in becoming a baby who needs a whole community to raise him.

This is a vision for the whole world to become one community gathered around this baby.

You know what it's like when a new born baby is born into a family.

All of a sudden this baby is the centre of attention, everyone is looking at it. The baby doesn't need language.

In the church in Stirling was a lady who'd gone to school with Chris Grundy in Pennsylvania. We sang his song earlier, Drawing Nearer, in which he voices a longing for God to come in like a thief and steal our hearts, like a baby.

Because that's what babies do, they steal our hearts.

I'm struck with the thought that even the new baby next door has the potential to be God with us.

Or how about, linking in to what Jesus said last week, that the sick one we visit has the potential to be God with us?

Or the prisoner, or the hungry, or the stranger?

It's good to lament where God is absent. How long O God?

It's good to long for where God is not yet present. When God, when?

It's good to wait for God's coming by watching for him slipping in unnoticed, unexpected, vulnerable, in the stranger, in the neighbour, in one another.

O God, come in like a thief
And steal our hearts
Like a baby
Like a baby