

## 1/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Mark 13 - is very similar to Matthew 24.  
We are filling in a small gap in Matthew's account.

Matthew 22 and 23 - during October  
contained Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom.  
Render to God what belongs to God.

The Greatest Commandment -

Love God with all you have and all you are.

Obeying God inside - not just in appearance.

Matthew 25 - during November

Jesus was telling Parables of Judgement

The Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids

half were shut outside,

and didn't get to share in the feast.

The Talents - some servants were thrown outside

and did not get to enjoy the king's banquet.

The Sheep and the Goats

separation again of those who gain eternal life

and those who will go to eternal judgement.

Now today - Mark 13 = Matthew 24

the reason for all this teaching.

Signs of the End of the Age

and a prophecy of Jesus' return.

The signs of the End of the Age are interesting.

People have looked carefully to see these signs

and in every generation, some have thought

This is IT!

E.g. ...

Waiting with Courage  
The End

Advent Sunday

Isaiah 64. 1 - 9  
Mark 13. 24 - 37

## 2/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

- The fall of the Temple in Jerusalem (AD 70)
- Betrayal of Christians by their brothers  
(the persecutions throughout the first 3 centuries)
- Earthquakes, wars, and famines.  
Every generation - including our own.

But Jesus warns - that there will be many false alarms.

There will be many false messiahs -  
claiming to be God's anointed.

Last Century was full of new religions  
each with their own Messiah - their own prophet  
claiming to be the fulfilment of God's promises

- Christian Science, who believe  
that we can have peace and physical healing now  
if only we believe.
- Mormons, who believe that Armageddon  
is just around the corner
- Jehovah's Witnesses, who believe that  
Jesus has already returned in South America.

Some of the physical signs - Mk 13. 24  
people thought were a description of Nuclear Winter

*but in those days, following that distress  
the sun will be darkened  
and the moon will not give its light;  
the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.*

But the end of the chapter warns us again  
that although signs will be there  
we do not know - cannot calculate - when it will be.

### 3/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

verse 32

*No-one knows about that day or hour,  
not even the angels in heaven,  
nor the Son,  
but only the father.  
Be on your guard! Be alert!  
You do not know when that time will come.*

So "that day" (as it is called)  
is shrouded in mystery.

Even Jesus did not know when it would be  
(I assume he does now!)

But there are things we do know about "that day";  
and because the Bible spells them out  
we can know with certainty.

Verse 26

*At that time men will see  
the Son of Man coming in clouds  
with great power and glory.  
And he will send his angels  
and gather the elect from the four winds;  
from the ends of the earth  
to the ends of the heavens.*

and verses 30 and 31 - Jesus says

*I tell you the truth (AMEN, I say to you)  
this generation (this race)  
will certainly not pass away  
until all these things have happened.  
Heaven and earth will pass away  
but my words will never pass away*

## 4/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Jesus teaches with certainty - "AMEN I say to you"

Jesus is coming again - visibly with the angels.

His people will be gathered together  
both those on earth and those in heaven.

The world will not be destroyed  
the human race will not be wiped out  
until God declares "The End"

And some things - e.g. the words of Jesus  
will endure even beyond the destruction of the universe.

At God's command, all will be gone -  
but Jesus and his people will still be standing.

There will be bad times before all that happens.  
God's kingdom may even appear defeated.

But God's plans - God's promises - God's people  
will survive all into eternity.

I find that exciting.

When the church is persecuted  
when it seems to be losing the battle  
(and don't we all feel like that some days)  
it is this doctrine  
of the End Times and the Second Coming  
that should sustain us.

## 5/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Now all this teaching - Matthew 21 - 25  
took place in Holy Week - Palm Sunday up to Easter

Jesus was aware of impending events  
which were going to seem catastrophic  
but which were in fact victorious.

God's way of doing things has patterns  
which recur - but get bigger.

Little defeats - little victories.

Easter - Big defeat - big Victory

The Church - despite opposition and persecution  
enduring from age to age.

The World - teetering on the edge of disaster  
(empires rise and fall - civilisations rise and fall)  
but faith in God endures  
and one day - it is the faithful  
who will be all that survives.

And God had been promising this from the beginning.

These late chapters of Isaiah are an example of this.

The prophet's dreams - his hope -  
in fact are inspired by God himself.  
This will happen.

God himself will come to earth.

God himself will take up his kingdom and reign.

The mountains will tremble - the forests will burn

## 6/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

God will show his anger and judgement  
to those who have sinned.

but the hope of the prophet - and the promise of God  
is that he will show mercy to those who have repented.

Isaiah 64. 9

*Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD;  
Do not remember our sins for ever.  
Oh, look upon us when we pray,  
for we are all your people.*

The prophet knows the heart of God  
although he cannot understand how God does it.

verses 5 and 6

*When we continued to sin against your ways,  
you were angry.  
How then can we be saved?  
All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

This is faith.

God is just - and entitled to wrath  
yet he is merciful, he loves and forgives  
and without being untrue to himself.

I do not understand how, but I believe.

This is why Christmas. This is why Jesus.

This is why the Advent Hope is part of our preparation

## 7/7 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

If God came to earth as Judge  
without Christmas - without coming as Saviour -  
no-one would stand - we would all perish.

Left to ourselves, and our sinful selfish natures,  
our world would be hurtling toward destruction.

Some people today look at the way the world seems to be going  
and they ask - "Where is God?"

The answer is - that if God had abandoned us  
we would be without hope.

But he has sent Jesus.

We as his church are called to bring  
love joy peace hope grace truth and goodness  
into this world.

God within us gives us the vision and the power.

God with us shares in our grief  
but he does not just stand by idly looking  
he is working with resurrection power  
to transform our lives and our world  
now in this age

and he will recreate it "on that day"  
at the End of the Age  
in perfection - as his fulfilled kingdom.

God is good - Jesus is coming again  
Come Lord Jesus, come soon.

## **Setting the Scene**

Drama - Where Angels fear ...

Today is Advent Sunday -  
a new Year in the Church's calendar.

Who has been practising the themes  
for the Advent Candles?

Today our theme is about new beginnings.

What did Isaiah wish God to do  
at the beginning of that reading?

"Rend the heavens and cone down"

What did he mean?

That God should tear open  
whatever separates us form heaven  
and come to earth himself.

In a few weeks - we shall be thinking of just that  
What? Christmas - God himself came in Jesus  
to born as a human person.

But today - Advent Sunday -  
we think of God doing the same again.

The Second Coming of Jesus.  
God - in Jesus - is coming again  
but not in weakness and humility  
rather in power and glory.

## S2/2 Holy Communion, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

So, on the Advent Ring  
what is our first candle for?

Answer - Jesus is coming again - The Advent HOPE

First coming - how was it announced?  
to a few shepherds on a hillside at night.

Second Coming? How will it be announced?  
to everyone - everywhere  
with trumpets and glory.

Who knew the answer -  
come and light the first candle.

Christmas - Jesus came quietly  
to be our Saviour.

Second Coming - don't know when  
but Jesus is coming loudly - in splendour  
and he is coming as Judge!  
And everyone will know  
and those who are not ready will quake!

**More later                    //**