

**Scripture Reading Isaiah 64:1-7 (*The Hebrew Bible, Vol 2, Prophets, Nevi'im. A translation with Commentary, Robert Alter, 2019*)**

as fire catches in brushwood,  
    as fire makes water seethe,  
to let Your name be known to Your foes,  
    before You nations quake.  
When You did fearsome things we had not hoped for,  
    You came down, and before You the mountains melted.  
They never had seen,  
    They never gave ear,  
no eye has seen a God besides You.  
    He acts for those who wait for Him.  
You struck him who delights in doing justice,  
    who recalls You in Your ways.  
Look, You raged, and so we offended,  
    when You hid Yourself we transgressed.  
We become all of us like an unclean thing,  
    and like a filthy rag, all our merits.  
And we all of us shrivelled like leaves  
    and our crimes bore us off like the wind.  
And none called Your name  
    nor roused himself to hold fast to You,  
for You hid Your face from us,  
    and gave us over to our crimes.  
Yet now, LORD, You are our Father,  
    we are the clay and You the Potter  
    and Your handiwork all of us are.

Comment: Amid despair the community still has a claim on God as Father, still accepts and even yearns to be moulded by Love's creative hand. Hope may be hard to find, still in trust of God's Holy Faithfulness, hope is our choice and our faithful response.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 1:3-9; Kerry**

Worship, witness and service, that is the call of faith. We heard Paul say that witnessing to Christ, who has already come, can be seen in a range of gifts of the spirit, which we've received. As we enter advent it becomes clear that we are also still waiting, waiting for the coming of Christ anew. Our reality in faith is that we are characterised by a certain in-betweenness. Between a beginning and an end. We, like Paul, and the Corinthians, live in a time of transition, full of uncertainties and ambiguity. Paul points out, that in this *in-between time*, the spiritual gifts we have been given are more than enough to keep us steady, to keep us going in our faithful community.

**Scripture Reading: Mark 13: 33-37; Kerry**

It's interesting when we start advent with a reading from the Gospel of Mark. A gospel with no nativity scene and no mention of Jesus' birth anywhere. But clearly Jesus was born, he lived, and he died. The little we heard was part of a Chapter, which is full of apocalyptic images, the fig tree, the persecution, the cosmic chaos.

This chapter provides a transition, a move from, the story witnessing to Jesus' life and ministry, to, the consequence of that ministry; his last days, a trial, a death and 'yes' for just a brief glimpse, a resurrection.

In turbulent times apocalypse seems close at hand, in a way, end times can offer relief, renewal. In the end there is always hope, hope that God's justice will finally come to fruition. The poor will be provided for, the hungry will be fed, and peace on earth will not be a greeting card wish but a visible reality.

In the end, hearers are urged to be vigilant, to keep awake; anytime, anywhere, God's justice, God's love, God's sovereignty might be birthed anew in the world. The end is always the promise of a new beginning, the Christ child becoming present, in our world, in our time, no one knows.

