

Pastor's Page
Coming ready or not.

Well, it's happened, it's only 3rd December and already I've bought three Christmas presents! (I must go and lie down!) I've also helped to decorate the church Christmas tree and bought an advent crown. Yes my countdown to Christmas has truly begun. Yet for my Family, my mum's birthday (6th December) heralds the moment when we start to focus on the annual festival, but hey, I'm already on a roll!

Today is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent means "*the coming*". The church's year doesn't begin on 1st January but on the first Sunday of Advent, looking forward to Christ's coming. History doesn't tell us what time of year Jesus was born (highly unlikely that it was December) but Roman Christians in the 4th century began to celebrate the Messiah's birth around the winter solstice (shortest day). Taking hold of a pagan festival in honour of a Roman god, Sol Invicta meaning "unconquerable sun" on 25th December, these Christians shifted the focus from a mythological god to the true deity, the unconquerable Son of God, Jesus the Light of the world. Hence believers (in the west) began to celebrate the birth of Christ just after the winter solstice on 25th December. Traditionally during advent the church remembers how the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of a King, (the Messiah) and the New Testament writers looked forward to the second coming (second Advent) of this very same Lord and King at the conclusion of history. **This is why Advent is primarily a time of preparation.** John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus. He did this by urging the people to get ready for the Christ, pointing away from himself to one greater than he (Jesus) and calling them to repent and be baptised. They had to clean up their act. **The New Testament writers and Jesus himself foretold the second coming of Christ.** We are not given a date, but as surely as He came to earth just over 2000 years ago we can be certain that Jesus will return. The Biblical emphasis with regard to Christ's second coming is one of "being ready" and Advent reminds us of this crucial theme.

Last weekend some friends stayed at my home. I knew that they were coming but I didn't know what day or what time! Because they were coming for the Sunday Service I assumed that they would arrive on Saturday evening. So when the doorbell rang at 12.00 noon on Saturday as I was removing a dust bag from my "Happy Henry" Vacuum cleaner, I thought "can't be them" But it was!! I hadn't done the cleaning, hadn't got all the extra food in, hadn't sorted out their bedroom, basically I wasn't ready for them!

An old song says; ***Were you ready world? To see how God's anointed looked, you never even had the hotel booked. You had no fine red carpets out that night, and no shiny brass band played. Census men worked over time that night and brothels carried on their trade. But when the heavens split, a little bit, to show the star made for His sake. You raised your arm to pull the curtain tighter, because the light kept you awake.***

There will be so many preparations over the next 17 days in the build up to Christmas but the most important preparation is for Jesus. **The Advent question is not, are we prepared for Christmas, but are we prepared for Christ?**

3rd December 2006