

An Advent hope in a dark world

I wonder how many of us woke up on Wednesday, 9th November and thought that the world had gone mad! I couldn't believe it when I heard that against all the odds, the United States had voted for Donald Trump to be their next President. I still can't believe that this is true – while neither candidate was perfect, surely there is so much about Donald Trump, his views and his attitudes and his lack of experience that suggests he is not suitable for this high office. However, he has been elected and democracy means that we have to accept this, whether we like it or not.



As I drove to Droylsden that morning, so many questions went through my head: How could God have let this happen? How can I understand where Jesus Christ is in all of this? What should the Christian response be when you fundamentally disagree with someone's political views, especially when they seem to be lacking justice and mercy? However, by the time I arrived in Droylsden I had started to come up with some responses, helped by the Church's seasons! In November, we have been in the 'Kingdom Season' when we remember those who have encouraged us in our faith, those who have died and those who have sacrificed their lives for their country in conflicts around the world. Our Bible readings in church give us glimpses of heaven and finally on the last Sunday before Advent, we celebrate Christ the King and acknowledge him as King of all and as our King. Throughout November, we are reminded that the values of God's kingdom are justice, truth and self-sacrifice and that these are seriously at odds with the values of the world that we live in.

We don't know what heaven will be like but we do get hints throughout the Kingdom season that it will be filled with the glory of God, where peace and justice reign and God's love is greater than any love we have ever known. All will be equal in the eyes of God, regardless of gender, ethnicity, wealth (or lack of wealth) and sexuality.

We can sometimes catch glimpses of heaven on earth, and indeed each time we pray the Lord's prayer saying 'your kingdom come, on earth as in heaven' we are committing ourselves to help God in making earth reflect heaven. A place where there is peace and justice, where love abounds, where all are equal. This is the world that Christians should be looking to create and longing to be part of. Sadly, this is not the world that Donald Trump seems to be wanting to bring about with his words of building walls to keep people apart or through his disrespect of women, people of different religions and ethnicity.

The season of Advent (which starts this year on Sunday, 27th November) marks the start of our new church year. At this time, we look forward not only to the coming of Christmas and celebrating the first time that Christ came to earth but also of the time when he will come again. We will be reminded of the importance of being ready for that time when Christ comes back and be encouraged to live each day as holy people. This may bring us into conflict with other people and may put us out of step with our national and world leaders but the message of Advent is clear – God will judge those who turn their back on the values of the Kingdom.

This made me realise that while I can't change the next President of the United States, I can live my life in my family, my church, my community so that the kingdom values of peace, justice and self-sacrifice reign. The more of us who make this decision, the more we will see these values grow and take hold. In the aftermath of the election results, I came across these words of Martin Luther King which seem so apt for the world that we find ourselves in and this season of Advent: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." This Advent, let us all look to the light and let love fill our hearts so that God's kingdom might come more quickly here on earth.

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