

# *Worship in the Waiting - Active Patience*

## *Order of Service for the 2nd Sunday of Advent 2020*

### **Intro Poem**

Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow. Refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

When is this coming? Why can we not know how long we have to wait for your return? Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow!

Or, help us in the lingering to learn  
your saving way that savours love, and so refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow: refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

### **Advent Crown Prayer**

[Invite the congregation to hold up two fingers]

LEADER: We light the second candle here, for the second coming of Christ.  
He will return, ending pain and fear, restoring the world to life.

Jesus, we trust in your return;

**ALL: O come, O come Emmanuel.**

Help us live with patient hope,

**O come, O come Emmanuel.**

### **Song: We wait with great expectancy**

We wait with great expectancy  
to see your Kingdom come.  
We trust your word to be fulfilled  
and pray your will be done.  
So in our world of ache and loss  
we're calling out, as one:

Come Lord Jesus,  
we hunger and we yearn  
for your return.  
Come Lord Jesus,  
oh we pray for your return.

You came to us so long ago  
and you will come again.  
We long for heaven on the earth,  
an end to grief and pain.  
Lord, may our lives anticipate

and usher in your reign.

Come Lord Jesus,  
we long to know you here,  
come and draw near.  
Come Lord Jesus,  
oh we long to know you here.

So lead us in your patience, Lord,  
and help us match your pace,  
to walk the straight and narrow road  
in rhythms of your grace,  
and may this Advent way of life  
all hurriedness replace.

Come Lord Jesus,  
and teach us how to wait,  
you are not late.  
Come Lord Jesus,  
help us worship as we wait.

*To the tune of GOD REST YOU MERRY, public domain.  
Words © Sam Hargreaves, admin. Jubilate Hymns Ltd.  
copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk*

## Reading: Psalm 40: 1-14

## Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

## Reflection: Active Patience

As Christmas approaches, we wait with a sense of anticipation and impatience. I wonder: How patient are you when it comes to waiting? Will you, for example, patiently eat one chocolate per day from your Advent calendar, or will you scoff them all in the first weekend? Can you resist having a sneaky look at the presents under the tree? Are you holding back putting your decorations up until a few days before Christmas, or have they been up for a month already? Do you save the Christmas music until December or has Michael Bublé been on since September?

This year we have all had to practice patience as never before. We have all been in 'lock down' for greater or lesser periods of time, depending on where you happen to live, and we have had our lives disrupted, our activities, projects and dreams put on indefinite hold. Many of us have suffered loss of loved ones or of important and precious parts of our lives. So I think, at the very least we have some excuse for our impatience, for wanting to draw comfort from Christmas this year.

Last week we talked about Jesus' second coming - the Bible's promise that Jesus will return and bring the fullness of his Kingdom on earth. If we are honest, many of us can struggle with that idea. You might have heard some teaching about this which was confusing or scary. There are some believers who seem obsessed with the idea of Jesus' return. Others of us might be put off by these more extreme interpretations, and perhaps do our best to ignore the idea of the second coming altogether. It has been 2000 years since Jesus returned to heaven, so it is understandable if people give up hope that God will ever return and put the earth right.

## Where Is This "Coming"?

If you feel like that, you are not alone. Many of the first Christians lived with an eager expectation that Jesus would return in their lifetime, but after just a few years some of them began to lose hope. We can see this in Peter's second letter:

*"Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'" (2 Peter 3:3-4)*

Does this sound familiar to you? You might have heard this from non-Christian friends, or even wondered about it yourself. Isn't 2000 years a long time to wait for the return of Jesus?

## Not Slow, But Patient

Peter's first response to this question is interesting:

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient..." (2 Peter 3:9)*

Do you know anyone who eats ice creams in a hurry, bolting them down as if it's a race? Then they look at their friend who has just taken three tiny licks from their bowl, and say "Why are you so slow?!" The friend might reply: "I'm not slow, I'm savouring every bite. I'm patient."

Knowing that God is patient and prepared to wait should challenge the hurriedness of our modern lives. Do you feel like you rush from one thing to the next? Are you always looking for the fastest check-out queue at the supermarket? Do you get annoyed when your computer seems to take an age to download something, or your child dawdles over putting on their shoes? Maybe we need to learn that what might feel like slowness to us can, at the same time, be a lesson in godly patience.

Beyond this, Peter tells us that God has a vital reason why he is holding back his return:

*“He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”  
(2 Peter 3:9)*

Peter knew that the final return of Jesus would come with judgement over the earth. Jesus’ cross and resurrection mean that when we are in him we have no fear of judgement. But entering into God’s Kingdom does require us to believe in him and come in repentance. For this reason, God is patiently holding back the return of Christ, so that everyone on earth has the chance to respond to his gift of forgiveness and restoration.

## **Cleansing Fire**

Peter describes God’s judgement like this:

*“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” (2 Peter 3:10)*

For various reasons this passage has been misunderstood to mean that God is going to destroy the earth. This has fed the mistaken idea that the Christian hope consists only of a spiritual heaven. But that idea ignores the wider biblical picture which Peter is drawing on, the promise of Isaiah of a new heaven and new earth (65:17, 66:22). Peter spells out:

*“in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13).*

This is the same new heaven and new earth which John sees in Revelation 21:1-2. The important question is - what kind of “new” are these writers describing? I’m no Greek scholar but I have read that there is a Greek word *neo* which means “new” in the sense that it didn’t exist before. But this isn’t the word used in these passages. Peter and Revelation both use the word *kainos*, which means having a new quality about it - being “renewed” or “remade”. It is the same word which describes our transformation as Christians in 2 Corinthians 5:17 - you are a new (*kainos*) creation. The old sinful, broken life has gone, the renewed holy, restored life has come.

God is not planning to put the earth in the bin and start again, for those familiar with the Hitchiker’s guide to the Galaxy: - he’s not going to demolish it like the Vogons and then build a replica like the Magratheans! Instead, He is planning to take the earth as it is and refine it, remake it and renew it. The Bible often speaks of God’s judgement as a cleansing fire which burns off impurities:

*“But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” (Malachi 3:2-3, also Zechariah 13:9, 1 Peter 1:7)*

God’s judgement is a fire that will refine the earth until only pure gold is left. So the picture Peter is painting here is of God’s final judgement burning up all that is unjust, impure, ungodly, laying bare the earth until the old “order” of things has been destroyed and the original intention of God has been restored. In Revelation, the City of God comes down from heaven to earth, “the old order of things has passed away” and God promises to be with us on this restored earth forever.

## **Active Expectation**

When you’re waiting for something, knowing what you are waiting for changes how you wait. A child waiting for a Christmas present has a different attitude to a child waiting for the dentist. You wait for your wedding day in a very different way to waiting for your car MOT.

We are not waiting for an eternity sitting on clouds, or an endless church service, or an infinite sermon. We are waiting for the restoration of heaven and earth, with every good thing made new and abundant life for all. Knowing what God will do when Jesus returns ought to change how we live today. Peter writes:

*“Since everything [of the old order of things] will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming... So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to*

*this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (2 Peter 3:11-12,14, comment added)*

Since this is our ultimate goal, Peter says, here is how we should live. We should live in ways which please God, which imitate Jesus, which work for the good of his creation, which build community and society, which seek justice and fairness. We should communicate the Kingdom of God in how we speak and live and so not only proclaim it, but even somehow “speed its coming”.

## **Hymn: Lo, he comes with clouds descending,**

### Verse 1

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,  
once for favoured sinners slain;  
thousand, thousand saints attending  
swell the triumph of his train:  
Alleluia!  
God appears on earth to reign.

Those dear tokens of his passion  
still his dazzling body bears;  
cause of endless exultation  
to his ransomed worshippers:  
with what rapture  
gaze we on those glorious scars.

### Verse 2

Every eye shall now behold him  
robed in glorious majesty;  
we who set at nought and sold him,  
pierced and nailed him to the tree,  
deeply wailing,  
shall the true Messiah see.

### Verse 4

Sing, amen, let all adore thee,  
high on thine eternal throne;  
Saviour, take the power and glory,  
claim the kingdom for thine own:  
come, Lord Jesus!  
Everlasting God, come down!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

### Verse 3

## **Confession Prayer - Rhythms of Grace**

LEADER: Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**ALL: teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with everyday life. We rush around, irritated at delays, frustrated with things and people which do not move at the pace we would like.  
Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with answers to prayer. Sometimes we treat you like a vending machine, or assume to know your will and your best for us. Help us to trust your timing and your kindness.  
Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Holy God, forgive our impatience with your coming again. You are not slow, you are patient, May we live in holy anticipation of your return.  
Jesus, Prince of Peace,

**teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace.**

Thank you that you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. You are patient with our mistakes and forgive our sins. We receive your peace afresh today.  
Jesus, Prince of Peace,

teach us to walk in your rhythms of grace. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer - Our Father...

## Song: One day for the Lord's like a thousand years,

*One day for the Lord's like a thousand years,  
and a thousand years like a day.*

*The Lord is not late,  
he is patient to wait,  
so help us be ready, we pray.*

God, where is the "coming" you've promised,  
the time when all things are put right?  
You hold back the day  
Wanting all to be saved,  
then you'll come like a thief in the night.

*One day for the Lord...*

The heavens will vanish in thunder,  
as earth is consumed in the flames,

new heavens will dawn,  
as the earth is reborn,  
where your goodness and justice will reign.

*One day for the Lord...*

We'll live in the light of your coming,  
awaiting the day you appear,  
a people of peace  
living holy and free  
till your home and your heaven is here.

*One day for the Lord...*

*Words and music © Sam Hargreaves, admin. Jubilate  
Hymns Ltd. copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk*

## Sending Prayer

LEADER: In Christ we are a new creation:

**ALL: remade, renewed, restored.**

Jesus you will come again, perfecting all of creation:

**remade, renewed, restored.**

Help us live in the light of your coming,

lives of grace and peace:

**remaking, renewing, restoring.**

Send us out, to bless the earth and bless all people:

**remaking, renewing, restoring. Amen.**

*Some of the resources used in this service are from Engage Worship's resource pack for Advent and worship on the theme of Worship in the Waiting. This theme is being followed by some of our churches through Advent.*

CCLI Licence 176885

# ONE DAY FOR THE LORD

D G/D D

One day for the Lord's like a thou - sand years, and a

4 G/D D A G D/F# A Bm

thou - sand years like a day. The Lord is not late, he is pa-tient to wait, so

8 G A D A

help us be rea - dy we pray. God, where is the "com - ing" you've  
The hea - vens will van - ish in  
We'll live in the light of your

12 Bm G Bm

pro - mised, the time when all things are put right? You  
thun - der, as earth is con - sumed in the flames, new  
com - ing, a - wai - ting the day you ap - pear, a

15 G D A Bm

hold back the day, want - ing all to be saved, then you'll  
hea - vens will dawn, as the earth is re - born, where your  
peo - ple of peace liv - ing ho - ly and free till your

17 G A Bm A/C#

come like a thief in the night. One  
good - ness and just - ice will reign.  
home and your hea - ven is here.

Live acoustic video available from [engageworship.org/waiting](http://engageworship.org/waiting)  
Words and music © Sam Hargreaves, admin. Jubilate Hymns Ltd. [copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk](mailto:copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk)  
Please remember to report any photocopies on your CCL license. CCLI # 7162755