



**A sermon for the Cathedral Eucharist at Wells
Cathedral, preached on Sunday 30 November 2025
by the Reverend Dr Felix Mascarenhas, Priest Vicar.**

The First Sunday of Advent

“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ... Keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”

As a young lad I loved Advent, probably more than Christmas. Christmas Day was short; and quickly over, leaving in me a void. But Advent was a joyful long time, which one could live, reflect, taste and sing. It was also a busy time and one of great expectations!

It was a time to prepare the decorations, like Chinese lanterns, stars, cribs, carols, cards, gifts and above all the sweets; I mean sweets prepared at home; nothing was bought from shops, all was home-made! A very different culture!

And there was above all, the spiritual aspect. One special item was the Christmas novena. When I heard the first hymn, “*Drop down, ye heavens*” it took me back to that age of 12.

In the seminary, we sang that hymn, in Latin: *Rorate coeli de super, et nubes pluant justum.*”: Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. (Isaiah 45.8). I loved listening to it after so many years!

For years, the people prayed for the Messiah. They thought he would pour down from the clouds, simply because they had no idea what was beyond the clouds. And the prayer for salvation continues even today.

Two technical notes, at every Advent are:

From Latin “Adventus”, it means “the coming” of the Saviour. Four Sundays of preparation for Christmas and also of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, the Apocalypse, the end of the world (and certainly of our own death, if we happen to be there until then).

Secondly, on Advent Sunday, we begin a new liturgical year. This year, it is Year A, when we shall read on most Sundays, the gospel of Matthew, where it is all about the coming of God’s kingdom. Apart from being the longest gospel with 28 chapters, his gospel presents Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament. Jesus, born from the line of David is the new Moses! Thus, he has plenty of quotes from the Old Testament.

During the time of Jesus, there was a conviction and even expectation that the world was going to end soon. Jesus was asked when this end was coming. He gives a very clear answer: *“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

After the death of Jesus and particularly during the first two centuries AD, that conviction was even stronger. We find the gospel passages and Paul’s letters, making references to this thought. Was there some misunderstanding among the people?

The world has not ended even after two thousand years; and according to physicists, this should probably not be, until another 7 or 8 billion years. But the real and relevant meaning for each one of us is none other than the moment of our death. But this does not mean we should sleep and not be awake.

Chapter 24 of Matthew is a great eschatological reading where Jesus speaks about the end of the world and the coming of the son of Man. Here, Matthew links the end of the world with the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus, in response to the curiosity of his disciples, takes them back to the times of Noah.

That story of Noah and his ark (Genesis 6) is a fascinating one. Jesus says: *“As in the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the son of Man”*. The story of deluge and floods. We all are aware how floods come all of a sudden and people die. And it happens now so often.

It is interesting to note how any church or even this cathedral looks like an ark of Noah (upside down). The church wants to think of itself as an ark, a place of safety and refuge. For those who believe, it is a place to be born and saved as God’s children.

(In English, we usually attribute material things the neutral gender. I often wondered why the English attributed the ship the feminine, “she”. Is it because in Latin, it is feminine? Above all, I also wonder why the nave of the church is not called navis, in nominative case, which should usually be. In Latin, (navis navis, third declination and nave is ablative case, (by, in, from navis). Is it in ablative case to imply theologically, that we are saved/born in (by, from) the ship/church? I do not know.)

It is worth noting that in Genesis 6, we already have a new plan or a covenant even before we come to chapter 12 where history begins. And God’s plan or economy of salvation, continues even in our times.

Advent is essentially linked to the word Messiah. I believe, in Advent, we are called to reinvent the meaning of that old phrase, the original sin, not in the sense of guilt, but with faith and hope. Yes, we are called to be holy, but we do need a Saviour. Why?

You might have heard in these days the name of Rutger Bregman. In his book “*Humankind*” he argued how humans are hardwired for kindness and that with generosity we can bring about a true change in society. But if so, how come there have been and there are still in the world today, persons who are monsters?

However, last week, having listened to Bregman’s first Reith Lecture, one has to accept his great idea of a need of a “Moral Revolution.” According to him, small and committed groups can bring about moral revolutions. He says in the past, we have had various revolutions in farming, industry, technology, politics etc. and now it is time for a “Moral Revolution”. This is a wonderful idea and an invitation for all. Groups and institutions which have perseverance and long-term vision, like churches particularly if they unite, are ideal to promote Moral Revolution. Something to reflect as we pray for God’s kingdom.

In this season of hope, we are called to be awake and vigilant; observant and conscious; look around and live the moment and work together to bring about that Moral Revolution. Can this Advent be a catalyst for that Moral Revolution?

A few verses from today’s omitted second reading, offer us the essence of message for today: *“Brothers and sisters, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ!”* (Romans 13.11–14).

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