**Trust in the slow work of God.**

With the feast of Christ the King celebrated yesterday, a new year now begins in our church calendar with the season of Advent. Whilst celebrating Christ as King, we may still find ourselves left with nagging doubts. For a cursory glance at the news or perhaps our personal circumstances, can make triumphant celebration of the reign of Christ seem rather hollow or at best premature; the powers of this world appearing very much alive. With our world still in turmoil and facing growing uncertainty, there is much to make us anxious and worried.

I find the season of Advent that we are entering to be particularly helpful here, pointing us toward the coming Kingdom of God. Advent invites us to see beyond the news, our concerns and our frantic preparations for Christmas and embrace the deeper reality, to wait and live hopefully amidst chaos and heartache.

When Pilate quizzed Jesus, "Are you king of the Jews?" Jesus replied that "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." (John 18:33,36). In other words, ‘Pilate, you and Rome, your way of power and violence is the way of this world, but my kingdom reign is of another way entirely.’

The politics of God is all about love. The way of love that Jesus taught and lived is not sweet, soft, or sentimental. His way is unselfish, sacrificial, seeking the good and the welfare of others. The Word made flesh reaches deep into humanity to draw us into his eternal compassion and endless love.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin suggested that the discovery and harnessing of fire was one of the greatest discoveries of human history. Humanity has shown a great capacity to take fire and use it both for good and ill, since then. He also went on to say that if humanity ever captures the energy of love, then for the second time in the history of the world, humanity will have discovered fire.

The apostle Paul wrote that, “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal. 5:6).American Bishop Michael Curry said, ‘The way of love will show us the right thing to do, every single time. It is moral and spiritual grounding—and a place of rest—amid the chaos that is often part of life. It’s how we stay decent in indecent times. Loving is not always easy, but like muscles, we get stronger with repetition and as the burden gets heavier. And it works!’

Every small, even insignificant, act of love extends the Kingdom rule of God. With every act of love, another pinprick of light shines out, and the kindness, mercy and tenderness of God flows out, meeting the brokenness of humanity.

Prayerful stillness releases that same flow of divine grace toward us, gently decluttering heart, mind and soul, meeting us in our worries and anxieties. Bestowing grace to trust that the Light is not overcome by darkness, and grace to trust in the slow work of God. Grace to keep waiting and watching, patiently and attentively, for the return in power and glory of God in Jesus Christ.

Another title for yesterday is “Stir up Sunday” from the Prayer Book collect asking God to “stir up the wills of his faithful people to bear the fruit of good works”! In stillness, we can also find inner strength and resources, as we face outward to the world, to walk in the way of Love. Prepare to be surprised, for God’s coming and actions may well seem unfamiliar. The way of love may be as surprising as a crucified man rising from the dead. God can reveal himself in all things, even the tragic and sad in our world, as the revolutionary way of the cross reveals.

**To lead us into silence and stillness**, verses from an Advent hymn:

Come, O long-expected Jesus, born to set your people free!
From our fears and sins release us, Christ in whom our rest shall be.

Born your people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king;
born to reign in us for ever, now your gracious kingdom bring.

**To lead us from our silence:**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.