

**Sermon Summary**  
**1<sup>st</sup> of Advent**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2012**

- Christmas marketing kicked off just after Fathers' Day and already the church diary has seen Christmas carol services and the like
- I miss the season of Advent when it is bypassed by the consumer and materialist driven focus on Christmas
- Advent hymns are some of the deepest and most challenging yet they are increasingly squeezed out by cosy carols.
- During Advent many of the readings have an unsentimental edge which is in stark contrast to much of the way Christmas material is presented
- The OT prophets' Day of the Lord is something which might make one hesitant
- The apocalyptic passages of the NT like this morning's gospel (Luke 21:25-38) and especially Revelation contain themes which seem harsh and judgemental- even opposed to the message of a God of love.
- These harder readings and themes are there because they serve a vital purpose.
- They're a way of reminding us of the seriousness of the moral life and the choices we make about behaviour. The language of apocalyptic is there to remind us that behaviour contrary to the will of God has negative consequences.
- The language of heaven is used to describe the hurts of the earth: the damage done to both victims and perpetrators when bad choices are made.
- This needs to be said.
- If we head down a cosy and tempting route of saying that God forgives all, no matter what they do – sometimes called universalism., we send a message that says: How you live is irrelevant- everything will be alright.
- In so doing, we remove some of the last possible barriers which prevent the powerful and unscrupulous from abusing the weak and powerless, and leave that second group completely open to victimisation.
- Advent is a season in which we are called to take stock of the serious business of life, reflect on the consequences of actions which are contrary to the will of God, and make any changes needed to our behaviour..

2 December 2012