



The Journey Begins

Study One



Stefano di Giovanni, The Journey of the Magi, c.1434

Opening Psalm : A Pilgrim's journey

(Read Psalm 122)



*'I rejoiced with those who said to me,
Let us go to the house of the Lord.'* v.1)

Travelling is a recurring theme throughout the Advent story, whether it is Mary's visit to Elizabeth, or Joseph and Mary, the Magi and shepherds heading for Bethlehem.

Travelling in the expectation of hearing or seeing something special from God happens throughout the Bible and does not end with Advent as we are all travellers on a journey of faith.

Psalm 122 is one of several Songs of Ascents and may have been sung by pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem, perhaps as they climbed the fifteen steps of the temple during major festivals.

The writer pictures Jerusalem as a central meeting place for believers, and particularly the 'house of the Lord' where

God is worshipped. It was also central to the prosperity, peace, and security of its people, and therefore worthy of prayer for its future safety.

Jerusalem was also at the heart of Jesus' life and mission. Soon after his birth he was presented at the temple, and later he would teach, heal, and celebrate the Jewish festivals there. It was in Jerusalem that he shared the Last Supper, prayed in Gethsemane, was arrested, crucified, buried and resurrected. And it was there that the early church was born.

Walk in the light of the Lord

(Read Isaiah 2:1-5)



‘Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”’ (v.3)

Isaiah talked previously of a ‘stubborn and rebellious nation’ more interested in self than their God, yet here the message changes to one of hope, with every nation journeying to Mount Zion, the mountain of the Lord, seeking God’s wisdom and peace so that they might ‘walk in his paths.’

Readings such as this show Isaiah speaking of a universal religion, not competing with local gods such as Baal, but with a belief that here was the one true God, and because of this it was vital that the Israelites led by example both in their public and private life.

Reading this today, the world might seem a long way from the unity that Isaiah

speaks of. Indeed, it is easy to take the view that these words refer simply to ‘the last days’ and in so doing dismiss our own responsibility to see them fulfilled in any way now.

History does not speak well of nations coming together as in Isaiah’s words, but the world should not define our faith. Believers are called to live out their faith today, as have so many in the past, so that today others might be inspired to begin their own journey of faith toward the one true God.

Keep walking

(Read Matthew 24:36-44)



‘So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.’ (v .44)

This passage brings both a warning and a comfort. Jesus reminds us that no one knows the day or hour of his return and calls us to live faithfully in the tension of ‘not knowing.’ As it was in the days of Noah, life continues in its many and diverse ways, until the flood comes. The warning is to not be lulled into spiritual complacency by the rhythms of daily life.



Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat, Simon de Myle

For believers today it is about living with purpose.

Faith isn't a passive waiting room, but active discipleship. We are told to 'be ready,' not in fear, but in an expression of faith that is seen through our lives.

Whether we're advocating for justice in an unjust world, standing with refugees, or simply showing kindness to our neighbour, we embody the readiness Jesus describes in our individual journeys of faith.

The story of Noah reminds us that God provides a way of salvation for those who trust Him. In Christ, we already have our ark - our refuge and hope. The challenge is not to drift into spiritual sleep, but to stay alert, living with expectation and joy. Every moment of faithfulness becomes an act of preparation, as we wait for the day when our Lord returns.

'Advent is the beginning of the end, in all of us, of everything that is not Christ.'
(Thomas Merton)

'Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man.' (Pope Francis)



A prayer

Lord Jesus,

You remind us that no one knows the hour of Your return, not even the angels in heaven. Yet You call us to live with watchful hearts and faithful hands.

In a world full of distractions, help us stay awake to Your presence and Your purpose. Teach us to build lives not on fear, but on love - lives that reflect Your justice, mercy, and truth.

Let our faith be active, our hope resilient, and our love generous.

Amen