



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

The Archbishop today led the Daily Service for BBC Radio 4.

You can read his reflection here:

I heard recently that there are young people in China wearing T-shirts, bearing the slogan: we are the last generation.

Alarmed and challenged by democratic deficit, the fear and reality of war, hunger, conflict, and all made worse and more immediate by climate crisis, they have concluded that there is no hope. The earth shrinks and diminishes, becomes more volatile, more frightening, and more fragile, and they conclude there is no future. They think they are the last generation.

They might be right.

Even from the comparative wealth and stability we enjoy in the UK, we could easily add to the list of challenges: lack of opportunity, food poverty, cost of living crisis, a widening gap between the very rich and very poor, war in Ukraine, war in Gaza, mass migration, hurricanes in Jersey, 40° summers and daffodils coming into bloom on Christmas Day. We, too, are anxious for the future. We are frightened.

The Advent Season speaks of the end times. It isn't hard to imagine that they are upon us now.

And we all respond differently – from pretending it isn't happening, to protesting on the streets, to pulling up the drawbridge.

However, I was also at a meeting recently where a leading political commentator speaking from a Christian perspective, and mindful that there will probably be a general election next year, was asked the question: Why should anyone bother to vote?

And we note, that the question itself comes from that same mindset that has lost hope in the future and has very little confidence that any decisions we make now could make any difference in the future, or that we might have leaders we can believe in.

She replied – and I thought it was a marvellously beautiful reply - that voting is a declaration of hope in the future. “Like giving birth to a child,” she said.

Those young people in China think there will be no more children, and we worry about what kind of a world we are bequeathing to our children, but we gather around these particular scriptures today, in this advent season, believing that the sign God gives us for a better, and more hopeful future, is a child.

Our reading today is also the text of the canticle, the Benedictus, that the church recites every morning. The anthem, the Nunc Dimittis, that will

be sung in a moment, is the canticle that the church sings every evening.

They are both from the early chapters of Luke's gospel, where Luke tells us about the birth of Jesus. The Benedictus speaks of the child, John, the one who is the forerunner of Jesus, the one who stands at the end of the Old Testament, and the beginning of the New, gathering together all the hopes of Israel and pointing resolutely to Jesus; and the Nunc Dimittis are the words of Simeon, as he greets the newborn Jesus in the temple, declaring him a light, not just for Israel, but for all the world.

We, too, must invest in a better future. We must be bearers of hope. But we do this, because of what we see, hear, and receive in Jesus. In him, we see all the longings of the human heart fulfilled. Jesus shows us how we can live in peace with God and with each other. He teaches us a way of inhabiting this earth, which can be sustainable, equitable and enable every person and every community to flourish in their own place.

Like John, we need to point to Jesus and to his kingdom.

Like Simeon, we need to greet and receive Jesus as our hope and light, and hope and light for all the world, for "by the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high has broken upon us, giving light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guiding our feet into the way of peace... Our eyes have seen God's salvation.

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/speaking-and-writing/sermons/bbc-radio-4-daily-service-monday-4-december>