

## “Hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest”

I love the season of Advent as an attempt to slow down amid all the frantic busyness of preparing for Christmas. It reminds me of all the different ways Jesus comes into our lives – long ago as a baby in Bethlehem, today in prayer and worship and our encounters with other people, and one future day in great glory.

One of my particular pleasures is the much-loved and ever-popular Carol Service. Through readings, carols and a wonderful variety of choir music, we “hear again the message of the angels, and read in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God” as the bidding prayer from King’s College, Cambridge so beautifully describes it.

For many years, the Church of England has celebrated the second Sunday in Advent as “Bible Sunday” because of the memorable words of the Collect:

Blessed Lord,  
Who caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning:  
Grant that we may so hear them,  
read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them,  
that by patience and comfort of your holy Word,  
we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Pope Francis has recently encouraged Roman Catholics to keep a ‘Word of God Sunday’ at the end of

January. In an Apostolic Letter called ‘He opened their eyes’, the Pope wrote of Jesus helping the disciples to

understand the Bible on the road to Emmaus. He said that “we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the risen Lord. Otherwise,” he warned, “our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut”.

The Pope has some quite pointed things to say about the poor quality of some sermons, but his greater concern is that people read the Bible and allow it to speak.

This Advent, Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, why not set aside a personal ‘Bible Day’ in which you perhaps aim to read one of the Gospels. It will only take a couple of hours. I pray that God will open our eyes afresh, and I’d love to hear what new things you discover.

With my love, prayers and best wishes,

Yours,



+John  
Bishop of Brixworth



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