Sermon:

When does the New Year begin? It depends on who you’re asking. For Māori it is June with Matariki, for the financial year it is 1st April, unless you’re Methodist in which case it is 1st July. The calendar year begins on 1st January, the Methodist year begins on 1st February, unless you are in UK in which case it is 1st Sept. For the lectionary it is today, Advent Sunday, which is rarely the 1st December. Phew!

Strange that the gospel lectionary reading begins the New Year with a reading about the end!

Reading talks about earth-shattering events, Son of Man coming in glory; we should look for signs, be alert.

Today many fear of rising seas, tsunami; does this mean salvation near = coming of Son of Man?

Two dangers – becoming too engrossed in the end-times, and ignoring/dismissing the end-times.

Key is to have one eye on the past, the other on future, whilst living in the present.

History is lived forwards and understood backwards!

Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand – on its own it is sad, but so what? The assassination moment can only be understood in relation to its past (assassins wanted south Slav provinces of Austro-Hungarian Empire plus Serbia to become Yugoslavia) and its future (World War 1); then it becomes important.

Any present moment can only be understood in relation to its past & future. True for ourselves, our parish.

Faith to understand the past, hope to look forward to the future, love to live well in the present.

Truth of Advent is that Christ comes not once, but that first coming releases him to come again and again in different ways and times. In our needs and in the needs of the world, he comes. In each case he comes to judge (evaluate, criticise) and to make all things new. Hence New Year.

Who here has a new baby in the family? Nice! Jesus’ birth is just like that, unless…

It can only be understood if the past (Jewish history) and future (cross/Rn) are understood.

Today we celebrate the presence of Christ in Communion, but this can only be appreciated if we know our past, and look out for God’s future, for us, our parish, and our world.

Let us wait with patience and quiet trust.