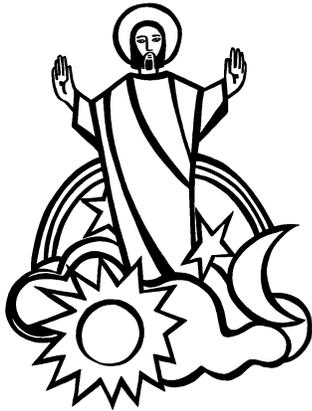


First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020



Introduction

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity,
Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,
whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,
we confess that we are held captive by sin.
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not welcomed the stranger;
we have not loved our neighbor;
we have not been Christ to one another.
Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news:
by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven,
and you are free—free from all that holds you back
and free to live in the peaceful kingdom of God.
May you be strengthened in God's love,
✝ comforted by Christ's peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 257 / LBW 34 (vs 1-2) *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

- ¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- ²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**
- ³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
- ⁴**O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**
- ⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- ⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**
- ⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
- ¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**
- ¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.
- ¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

Gospel: Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Open the heavens and come down; come Lord Jesus; O come, O come, Emmanuel. There is a theme to the beginning of Advent. Pleading. Pleading for Jesus to come again. Our Gospel text is about Jesus coming again, but the age-old question is – when?

Advent, or coming, is the season of the year that includes the four Sunday before Christmas. It is a time when we change Gospel texts for the new year (from Matthew to Mark), and begin looking at the coming, or advent, of Jesus. Of course, we are talking about Jesus coming as a babe in the manger, but we are also of Jesus coming again.

We know this, and every year we talk about it, but do we, as Isaiah writes, really want Jesus to tear open the heavens and come down? Do we really want Jesus to come now? Or do we really know what we want?

Mark writes of Jesus coming, and of the signs that we might see, but Mark also warns us that we are not to know the day or the hour. So, is Jesus coming today? Tonight? Tomorrow? In the year 2525? We just do not know. And we are not meant to know. So what are we to do?

Advent is a time of waiting. We wait for Christmas. We wait for Jesus to come again. Many of us might be simply waiting for Christmas to come and be over. Almost all of us are waiting for normal to return, or at least something that seem more like normal and does not include wearing masks or ordering our groceries on-line and picking them up at the curb. Almost anything that appears more normal and does not include Covid-19.

So why would we plead for Jesus to come now? Depending on your circumstances, you might or might not want Jesus to come now. We probably are not happy with the way things are in our life, in our family, in the world, but do we want it all to end? Do we really want Jesus to come and change everything?

Or, we might realize that things are not going well, our health might be failing, we might see that we are headed for economic disaster, or that we are just tired of all the politics and death and war and on and on and we just want it to stop. We are tired of Zoom, and masks, and Covid-19, and watching people we know suffer and die. We just want it all to stop. Come Lord Jesus, come now.

Waiting, and watching. Waiting is hard. It requires patience, endurance, and hope. Lots of hope. As we wait and watch, as we endure all that is going on around us, we hope that what we are waiting for is worth it. We hope that we are ready. We hope that it happens soon, but not too soon. We wait. We watch. And we pray, Come, Lord Jesus.

We do not know when Jesus will come. As Mark tells us, we are not to know. But - Mark also reminds us to be ready. But what does it mean to be ready? Does it mean that we are to stockpile food and toilet paper weapons for the Zombie apocalypse and hide from everyone? Or does it mean that we are to love our neighbors? Care for those who have less? Feed the hungry? Visit the sick? Pray for our enemies? Love others as God loves us?

We plead for Jesus to come, without knowing how or when or where. We wait, while caring for one another. We pray, that all might know Jesus. We prepare, as best we can. We proclaim the love of God to all. We wear our mask and stand 6 feet apart and we wash our hands. We participate in worship, in loving, in caring, in feeding, and in doing all that Jesus told us to do for our neighbors. This is Advent. Waiting, and watching; preparing and proclaiming.

Jesus is coming! O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. God be with us. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 436 / LBW # 31 *Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world.
Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses, especially those we name now. Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose names we know and those whose names are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 260 / LBW # 33

The King Shall Come

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.