

**II ADVENT 2013**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**THE COLLECT ROM. 15.4 ST. LUKE 21.25**

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*Scripture and song...woven together...make up this truly magical progression that carries us from prophecy to fulfillment of the Old Testament foretelling of the birth of Jesus.*

The Procession with Lessons and Carols for Advent Sunday has been called a ceremony, a performance, and a concert. It is, in fact, none of these. It is above all a Service of Worship centered on God's promise of forgiveness and redemption that came true with the birth of Jesus. The Service does, as Father Altberg so rightly states, perfect the commencement of our preparation for Christmas.

The focus of the Procession with Lessons and Carols for Advent Sunday is the reading of Scripture, and our response to those readings in prayer and hymns that anticipate the birth of Jesus. Scripture is also the focus of both the Collect and Epistle for the Second Sunday in Advent and has given the day its nickname "Bible Sunday".

It is no accident Archbishop Cranmer intended not only for the Liturgy to be delivered into the hands of the people in a language they understood, but the Bible be accessible to the people, and to be read by them. The Bible is not a secret document only the clergy can understand...it is to be read by everyone. The Prayer Book is 75% Bible and the Lectionary at the front gives us an easy, systematic, and orderly way of reading most of the Bible over the course of the year.

The Collect was written for the 1549 Prayer Book and echoes what Saint Paul says in the Epistle...the Scriptures were written to teach us...that through regular reading, we receive strength and encouragement, and have hope. The "Scriptures" Saint Paul is talking about is the Hebrew Bible...the Old Testament...without which the New Testament would not make much sense. Without the Old Testament, there would be no magical progression that carries us from prophecy to fulfillment.

When we read the whole Bible...Old Testament and New Testament...we begin to see how God has been interacting with his people all along through the prophets, priests and kings of the Old Testament...the Hebrew Bible...and through the Gospel and Epistle

writers of the New Testament. We are confronted with the awesome reality that the Bible is the story of the Redemption of humankind, written for us, so we might read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest what it teaches us.

We begin to understand the truth in what Saint Paul says when he tells us what was written, was written to teach us and to give us hope. God's plan for saving us came true with the birth of his Son, Jesus...our Emmanuel...our God with us. At a specific time in the history of humankind...God became like us and walked among us so that one day we might walk with him and all of the Angels and Saints in heaven. It is our belief that God became a human being like us we acknowledge in a visible way when we genuflect during the Nicene Creed.

The Gospel teaches us in Jesus' own words what to expect when he returns on the last day...his Second Advent. It will be a scary event only to those who are not ready for Jesus' return, who do not know him through the words of Scripture, or who have read but do not believe in the hope he offers. The Advent readings teach us it is time for us to clean house and put order back in our lives. Cleaning house is a good and productive thing and gets us ready to welcome Jesus on Christmas Day.

We also begin to understand and believe what Jesus teaches us in the Gospel that his Second Coming is something we should look forward to with eager anticipation and not with trepidation. Jesus tells us to stand up and raise our heads when we see him coming with great power and light, because he has come to take us back to heaven with him. Jesus tells us the words he has spoken are true and will never pass away...and Jesus always keeps his word.

When we leave here today, let each of us take a copy of the Order of Service for the Procession with Lessons and Carols for Advent Sunday. Let us read the lessons and hymns and learn again what they teach us. Let us rediscover for ourselves how Scripture and song...woven together...make up this truly magical progression called Advent...that carries us from prophecy to fulfillment of the Old Testament foretelling of the birth of Jesus.

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