

### III ADVENT 2014

#### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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*THE COLLECT 1 COR. 4.1 ST. MATT. 11.2*

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Listen...pay attention...respond...take action!

Advent is about first things...getting ready for the First Coming of Jesus on Christmas Day. Advent is also about last things...getting ready for the Second Coming of Jesus on the Last Day.

#### FIRST THINGS FIRST...

...While we should be prepared for Jesus' return at any time...we only have control over what is happening in our lives right now...this very moment...so that is what we should concern ourselves with. Tomorrow will bring a whole new set of challenges. That means we need to listen to the messenger...pay attention to what he says...respond to the message...and then take action now!

#### LISTEN...

...Five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Malachi...whose name means "my messenger"...told the people God had blessed them and had taken care of them. He had not broken his covenant with them...but in spite of his many blessings, they had broken the covenant with him. Malachi urged the people to turn away from their corrupt business practices and disrespect of God. He told them God was going to send another messenger to get people ready for his coming...and the Lord they were looking for would come suddenly to his Temple and make a new and everlasting covenant with them.

#### PAY ATTENTION...

...Malachi's prophecy came true in the birth and life of John the Baptist. He was the messenger Malachi was talking about...and he too had a message. John travelled around telling people the Messiah was coming and they should get ready for him. He told the people to repent...turn away from their sins and turn back toward God. He asked them to show they were serious about getting a fresh start and turning their lives around by getting baptized with water. But he also told them as good as his baptism with water was, someone even mightier than he would baptize them with water and the Holy Spirit...and they should get ready to welcome him.

#### RESPOND...

Many people listened to John's message of repentance and responded by turning their lives around. But John's work ultimately got him arrested. While he was sitting in jail, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was really the one they were looking for if they should look for someone else. Jesus told them to go back to John and tell him to go read what Isaiah had written about the Messiah 800 years earlier...the blind will see again...people who have trouble walking will be cured and walk without any trouble...people with skin diseases will be clear of those diseases...deaf people will hear again...the dead will be raised to life again...and the poor will rejoice because they will hear the Good News for themselves.

#### TAKE ACTION...

Malachi and John the Baptist were messengers who have messages to tell us. We need to listen to what they say...we need to pay attention to what they say...we need to respond to what they say...and we need to take action! We need to take seriously their call to repent...to truly be sorry for our actions in word or deed that have hurt others or ourselves...and to not just tell God we are sorry, but then to take action to change our bad words and deeds into good words and deeds. Saint Paul assures us in the Epistle we will be judged by our actions...lets make certain they are good actions.

#### LAST THINGS LAST...

Advent is about first things but it is also about the four last things...death, judgment, heaven and hell. All of us will face death and judgment...but the choice between heaven and hell is ultimately up to us. Heaven is the preferable choice...and what we are working toward. Taking care of first things...what the Collect tells us we should be doing now...will help us get ready for the last things. And the Advent message is always one of hope and peace that passes all human understanding.

While we are waiting for Jesus to return we should remember the messages of Malachi and John the Baptist and do what they tell us to do...listen...pay attention...respond...take action!

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