

**ADVENT SUNDAY – 2015**  
**SERMON - SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**  
**COLLECT FOR ADVENT-BCP P90**  
**ROMANS 13.8 MATTHEW 11.1**

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**WAKE UP...IT IS LATER THAN YOU THINK.** JOLTING COUNSEL TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM TODAY'S EPISTLE...FREQUENTLY APPLIED DIRECTLY TO ME IN THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP! PONDERING THIS MANY YEARS LATER, I CONCLUDED THIS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN A CONSPIRACY BETWEEN GOD, ST PAUL, PARENTS AND SEVERAL TEACHERS.

ADVENT SUNDAY inevitably brings about reconsideration of that portion of today's Epistle...frequently augmented by singing Bach's hymn of the same name. Effectiveness of the whole scheme is yet to be determined. Unless I miss my guess, some of you may relate to this as well...!

Today commences the Church Year 2016...well ahead of the Roman Calendar's January 1, New Year. As with any beginning, being AWAKE to the reality of a new beginning is highly beneficial.

For most, just the reality that Christmas Eve is 25 days from tomorrow is indeed an AWAKENING jolt...St Paul told the Romans there is lot more to life than just the physical side...it's high time, says he, to consider the spiritual realities of life...

Let's not panic...when we cross the right bridge and consider things in their proper context, life before Christmas gets easier...not harder...

Advent calls upon us to be realistic...consider LAST THINGS...first! How...? Consider carefully the Advent Collect used every day until Christmas...

*GOD HELP US THROW AWAY THE WORKS OF DARKNESS...THINGS WE DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW ABOUT, AND DO THINGS WE WANT TO BE SEEN, NOW IN THIS LIFE IN WHICH JESUS, YOUR SON, CAME TO BE WITH US AS A HUMAN BEING; SO THAT ON THE LAST DAY WHEN HE IS COMING AGAIN TO JUDGE BOTH THOSE ALIVE AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED, WE MAY BE READY TO MEET GOD.*

The Collect erases any lack of clarity...get things in order. Meditate during Advent upon PERSONAL ORDER AND READINESS...of the person each one of us meets in OUR mirror, not someone else's.

If the concept of Advent is "readiness" and this is a beginning, what's the point about LAST THINGS FIRST?

The Collect speaks to the four final things that Advent calls us to consider. These are death, judgment, heaven and hell. We don't find it very comforting and we'd prefer not to think about it, but death is something we have seen and shall all face. Heaven is something for which we all hope. Judgment is something we shall all face and Hell is the alternative to the attainment of Heaven.

Getting ready is not really complicated at all. The Epistle lays out in pragmatic terms what we're to do with our lives and that compels the physical preparations for Christmas...if we spend time doing what St. Paul identifies as the critical points we find ourselves pretty naturally prepared on all fronts. Fail to follow the advice and we'll be ill prepared and in a pretty messy state.

If the Epistle speaks directly to our preparation, what is today's Gospel about? Jesus is the revealed and acknowledged King who showed up and was not pleased with the mess made by the moneychangers and pigeon peddlers of God's Temple. One can readily conclude the moneychangers were not exactly comfortable by the time he left!

There's every reason to believe he'd be equally displeased to show up and find people still acting like moneychangers. Advent tells us to be ready when the King arrives...our house and life should be in order.

Advent compels reflectivity...the Church calls us to reconsider priorities and personal readiness. We must spend a few moments each day of Advent in prayer along with our physical preparations. How...? Apply common sense - BCP instructions...*SAY THIS PRAYER EVERY DAY, UNTIL CHRISTMAS.*

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