

I ADVENT 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ROMANS 13.8 MATTHEW 11.1

✠

WAKE UP...IT'S LATER THAN YOU

THINK...a line borrowed from Father Altberg's Sermon for Advent I from last year. It's later than you think...but not too late!

Advent Sunday is the beginning of the Church Year...our New Year's Day. Last Sunday we talked about making New Year's Resolutions...of both the secular and church kind. There is a difference between them.

When we make secular New Year's resolutions we promise to get rid of old things and start something new. Advent is not so much about throwing away old things as it is about taking a fresh look at them...the Collects, Epistles and Gospels readings we hear again and again throughout every Church Year.

The Advent Collect was composed for the seminal *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549. The rubric...the italicized instructions directing us to read the Collect every day during Advent...was added at the suggestion of Bishop Matthew Wren in 1662. Bishop Wren was the uncle of the great architect Christopher Wren...whose masterpiece is Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.

Father Massey Shepherd in his commentary on the Advent Collect writes it is remarkable in its antitheses:

- cast off darkness---put on light
- now---in the last day
- mortal life---life immortal
- great humility---glorious majesty

The crucial word, as Father Shepherd states, is NOW, which ties together the past, present and future.

The Advent Collect talks about the four final things we should consider: death, judgment, heaven and hell:

- Death---we don't like to think about...we have friends and family who have died...we will too some day...we can't avoid it
- Judgment---we will be judged by our actions now...they do speak louder

than words...and they show the disposition of our hearts

- Heaven---is what the writer of Hebrews says we all hope for but have yet to experience
- Hell---is the alternative to heaven

The word Advent comes from the Latin word **adventus** which means **coming**. During Advent we are getting ready for the coming of Jesus on Christmas Day. We can do that best by paying attention to the Collect and Lessons we read today.

Saint Paul tells us to wake up and stop acting like people who are asleep all the time. He tell us stop doing things that belong in the dark and to embrace light...to conduct ourselves as God's children who walk during the daytime. In plain speak...Advent is about getting our act together...especially in how we treat others...love God above all else...love others as we want to be loved.

The Gospel is the Palm Sunday story and seems strangely out of place for Advent...but it isn't out of place at all. Jesus came to us in humility, first as the little baby in the manger. He lived his life in humility, always doing what was right for others, and never thinking about himself. In the Gospel, he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, in humility, as Messiah and King.

When he gets to the Temple he is not happy at what he sees. People were selling things at inflated prices and charging high fees to exchange money. Jesus calls them thieves because they are not doing the right thing. By hurting others, they bring dishonor to God's House...the Temple. People within the Church who gossip or say unkind things about others, especially behind their backs, bring dishonor to the Church and God.

WAKE UP...IT'S LATER THAN WE THINK...

It's later than we think...but not too late! Now is the time to make some changes and do what is right. Now is the time for action. NOW!

✠