

II ADVENT 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
THE COLLECT ROM. 15.4 ST. LUKE 21.25



GOD, HELP US TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE WORDS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE YOU HAVE CAUSED TO BE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING!

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent was written for the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* 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 hope for eternal life given us in Jesus, both in his First and Second comings.

The “Scriptures” Saint Paul says were written earlier to teach us is the Hebrew Bible...the Old Testament...without which the New Testament would not make much sense.

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.

Archbishop Cranmer intended not only for the Liturgy to be delivered into the hands, hearts and minds of the people in a language they understood, he also wanted the Bible to be accessible to them and to be read by them. The Bible is not a secret document only for the clergy...it is for everyone!

A question people often ask me is where to begin...after all...the Bible is a “BIG BOOK”! The task of reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting it seems daunting to say the least.

The *Book of Common Prayer* is 75% Holy Scripture...it has been called the Bible in useable form. The Lectionary at the front gives us an easy, systematic, and orderly way of reading most of the Bible over the course of one year.

When we read the Bible every day we are struck with the awesome reality of its story...the Redemption of humankind...from the first words of Genesis to the last words of Revelation. It is our story!

We begin to understand the truth in what Saint Paul says...what was written...was written to teach us, strengthen our faith and give us hope.

God’s plan for saving us came true with the birth of his Son...Jesus...our Emmanuel...our God with us...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.

In the Mass we acknowledge in a visible way our belief God became *INCARNATE*...a human being like us...when we genuflect during the Nicene Creed and the Last Gospel.

Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel what to expect when he returns on the last day...his Second Advent. When Jesus returns it will be the final realization of our hope. The “signs” Jesus talks about will be scary only to those who are not ready for his return...who do not know him through the words of Scripture...or who have rejected the hope he offers.

After Jesus’ Ascension back to heaven the angels told his disciples we would see him return in the same way...with great power and light. Jesus tells us we will know what is happening just like we know summer is here when trees turn green and bear fruit.

The Advent readings teach us it is time for us to clean house and put order back into our lives. Cleaning house is a good and productive use of our time and gets us ready to welcome Jesus on Christmas Day. And the time to get ready...as we learned on Advent Sunday...is NOW!

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.

GOD, HELP US TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE WORDS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE YOU HAVE CAUSED TO BE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING...AND TO BELIEVE!

