

## II ADVENT 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

*THE COLLECT ROM. 15.4 ST. LUKE 21.25*

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***GOD YOU INSPIRED PROPHETS AND KINGS AND APOSTLES TO WRITE DOWN THE WORDS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE WE HEAR READ AT MASS...HELP US FIRST TO LISTEN TO WHAT WE HEAR...TO READ THE WORDS OURSELVES AND ABSORB THEM INTO OUR HEARTS...TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT WE HEAR AND READ...TO COMMIT WHAT WE HEAR AND READ TO MEMORY...THEN HELP US DIGEST HOLY SCRIPTURE SO IT BECOMES FOOD FOR OUR SOULS.***

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent was written for the seminal 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. It was suggested by what Saint Paul says in the Epistle...everything written in the Scriptures was written in order to teach us...in order that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement the Scriptures give us. The Collect gives today its nickname "Bible Sunday".

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer intended not only for the Liturgy to be delivered into the hands of the people in a language they understood...but the entire Bible...Old and New Testaments be accessible to them...and not just a few selected books. The Bible is not a secret document only the clergy can read and understand...it can and should be read by everyone!

Many people find the concept of systematic reading of the Scriptures intimidating at best...if not outright scary. A question often asked is, "Where do I begin? It's such a big book!" About 75% of the *Book of Common Prayer* is Bible...the Epistle and Gospel readings and the Psalms come directly from the Bible.

If we are searching for a systematic and orderly way of reading the Bible...the Lectionary in the front of the *Book of Common Prayer* is a good place for us to start. By reading the lessons appointed for Morning and Evening Prayer...we read through most of the Bible over the course of the Church Year...and we get to read through the Psalms twice.

When we read the whole Bible...Old and New Testaments...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 humanity.

We begin to understand the truth in what Saint Paul is saying about Holy Scripture... what was written...was written to teach us and to give us hope. Hope for us is more than a word...we learn at a specific time in history...God became like us and learned to walk among us...so that one day we might walk with him and all of the Angels and Saints in heaven. We acknowledge the Incarnation...God becoming flesh and blood...in a visible way when we genuflect during the Nicene Creed at Mass.

Advent is about getting ready for Jesus' first coming on Christmas Day...Advent is also about getting ready for his second coming...and fills us with hope and expectation for what lies ahead. The Gospel teaches us in Jesus' own words what to expect when he returns on the last day...his Second Coming will not be a scary event for those who choose the Word made Flesh and the Advent message of hope. We want to be...as Saint Paul says...people of hope... who inspire others to hope.

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.

It is only through, by, in, and with Jesus we are able to come to God for help...and God comes to us with gifts and blessings. The words of Holy Scripture are food for our souls...***SO THAT BY PATIENCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT WE RECEIVE FROM READING THE BIBLE EVERY DAY...WE MAY EMBRACE AND EVER HOLD FAST...THE BLESSED HOPE OF EVERLASTING LIFE...WHICH HE HAS GIVEN US IN JESUS.***

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