

IV ADVENT 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

PHILIPPIANS 4.4-7 ST JOHN 1.19-28

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King Jesus is coming in the morning...it's later than we think...but it's not too late to get ready to welcome him.

The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *adventus* and means *coming*. The Collect for the First Sunday in Advent sets the stage for what we should have been thinking about throughout Advent...

- Jesus first came to us not in blazing lights but as a fragile flame...a baby
- When he comes again it will be with great power and might surrounded by light
- At his first coming he came to save us from ourselves...a Divine reversal of a broken relationship...God walked among us so we might walk with him in heaven
- At his second coming...he will come to bring us into his Kingdom!

The importance of the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent is underscored by the rubric...the *italicized* instructions printed right after the Collect in the *Book of Common Prayer*...***This Collect is to be repeated every day, after the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas Day.***

When we read the rubric we need to pay attention to what it says...and follow through...read the Collect every day during Advent until Christmas Day...it will help us get ready for Jesus' arrival.

The question we should be asking ourselves today...are we ready to receive King Jesus into our hearts...our minds...our souls...into every aspect of our lives? Are we ready to walk in his Kingdom? And do we really believe he is God's Son...or should we look for someone else?

This morning's Gospel is a prequel to last week's. Some priests and acolytes from the Temple in Jerusalem come to John the Baptist and ask him is he is the one they are looking for..."No...said John...I'm his public relations guy...the voice of someone shouting in the desert...make a straight path for the Lord to travel."

Last week John the Baptist asked Jesus the same question. On this final Sunday in Advent we might feel compelled to join John and ask, "Are you the One who should come or should we look for someone else?" We should listen to Jesus' reply, "Take a look around. Those who have no doubt about me have peace and happiness that surpasses anything on Earth."

Jesus said those who believe in him are happy. It matters a great deal what we believe about him and it matters a great deal how we prepare ourselves to welcome him on Christmas Day. We often see ads that read *Jesus is the Reason for the Season*. We should take that saying seriously. We should also remind ourselves of what Saint James says...talk is cheap...actions speak louder than words!

If actions do speak louder than words then we must return to the four things the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent asks us to consider:

- Death is the culmination of life on Earth and we can't avoid it...but it is not the end...there is more to the story
- We are going to be judged by how we apply love in our lives...for orthodox Catholic Christians that means doing what's best for others...without attaching conditions
- Heaven is the place we long for...it is our hope and expectation
- Hell...not a good choice

Heaven is our objective...the only conclusion we can reach is Jesus is the One we've been waiting to come back and take us there.

King Jesus is coming in the morning. He brings us light and beauty beyond anything this world has to offer.

It's still not too late. Let's get our hearts and minds and souls ready to receive the King of kings...while we have time!

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