

## SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT 2017

### SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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#### *THE COLLECT JEREMIAH 23.5-8*



It's time to get stirred up...Advent is coming soon...and it's time to get stirred up

The Collect reminds us today is "*Stir up Sunday*". In Victorian times...people would go to Mass and hear the words "Stir up" in the Collect. It would remind them it was time to stir up the Christmas pudding so it would be ready to serve on Christmas Day.

While mom was busy stirring up the Christmas pudding...she would add a coin to the mixture...probably a sixpence. It's not hard to imagine the smile on the face of the child who found the coin. Today most people buy ready-made pudding at the market...no need to stir things up.

However, what we are asking for in the Collect is much more than a reminder to stir up the Christmas pudding and adding a coin. We are asking God to stir up our wills...so we can get busy doing good works...and receive the reward he has prepared for us.

There is something else we need to consider when we ask God to stir up our wills...it is ultimately our wills...and not our feelings or emotions...that should cause us to take action and do the good works that please God.

We're told in the Summary of the Law to love God and love others in the way we want to be loved. It's God's will we love and do good to others...even if we don't like them or "feel" like being nice to them.

We ask God to stir up his power and our wills...because without his power giving us the strength and determination to do what is right and good, our wills just aren't where they need to be. Our wills need to be God-focused and about the business of doing good works and seeing the results of our works grow and prosper...that is what pleases God...and conforms to his will.

The Lesson from Jeremiah which we heard read today has a decidedly Advent message. In 597 BC, Zedekiah, king of Judah, ignored warnings from Jeremiah and his own family and signed a pact with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and agreed to work for him.

But Zedekiah had an agenda and as soon as the pact was signed, he double-crossed Nebuchadnezzar and signed a pact with Egypt. The consequences for Zedekiah and his family were disastrous. King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and sacked Jerusalem. Zedekiah then watched all his sons get executed before getting thrown in prison where he spent the rest of his life.

Zedekiah's name means "the Lord our righteousness". When he double-crossed Nebuchadnezzar, he showed his true colors. He put God's will aside and betrayed the trust God had placed in him. Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, calls Zedekiah the "last and sorry monarch" of Judah.

But Jeremiah wrote to God's people not to be discouraged and to endure their hardships with patience. There was hope for a brighter future! God would send a savior...and he would be called **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**...and he would do what no human king could do...he would make things right again between God and his people. He would be a descendant of the great King David.

Jesus is **THE RIGHTEOUS ONE** Jeremiah is talking about. He empowers us to recognize our shortcomings and stirs up our wills...to do good works...and witnessing the positive results that come from our good works. The doing of good works is a reward in itself...because we know it is God's will we do them.

Finally..."*Stir Up Sunday*" is the Church's New Year's Eve. We often make resolutions at secular New Year's Eve gatherings...to eat healthier...to be better people...to work for peace in the World. Keeping those resolutions often takes a lot of will power.

It's time for us to make resolutions of the spiritual kind...let's ask God to stir up our wills...so we do the good works he has planned for us...and look forward to the reward he has prepared for those who love and do his will.

It's time to get stirred up...Advent Sunday is the Church's New Years Day...it will be here soon...it's time to get stirred up!

