

II ADVENT 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

THE COLLECT ROM. 15.4 ST. LUKE 21.25

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Scripture and song...woven together...make up this truly magical progression that carries us from prophecy to fulfillment of the Old Testament foretelling of the birth of Jesus.

Advent Lessons and Carols is a Liturgy centered on God's promise of forgiveness and redemption that came true with the birth of Jesus. The Service enhances our preparation for Christmas.

The focus of Advent Lessons and Carols is the reading of Scripture, and our responses to those readings in prayer and hymns that anticipate the birth of Jesus. Scripture is also the focus of both the Collect and Epistle for today...the Second Sunday in Advent and has given the day its nickname "Bible Sunday".

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer intended for the Liturgy to be delivered into the hands of the people in a language they understood...the first *Book of Common Prayer* was published in 1549. He also wanted Holy Scripture to be accessible to the people, and to be read and understood by everyone...and not just the clergy.

A question that often gets asked is how one should go about reading the Bible...it is after all...a BIG book...and people are sometimes intimidated by its size. The *Book of Common Prayer*, which is 75% Bible, makes the task of reading Holy Scripture easier. If we follow the Lectionary printed in front of the Prayer Book...we have a systematic and orderly and user-friendly way of working our way through most of the Bible during the course of one year.

Saint Paul tells us the Scriptures were written to teach us...that through regular reading, we receive strength and encouragement and hope. The "Scriptures" Saint Paul is talking about is the Hebrew Bible...the Old Testament...without which the New Testament would not make much sense. Without the Old Testament, there would be no magical progression that carries us from prophecy to fulfillment foretelling the birth of Jesus.

All of us should spend time each day reading the whole Bible. In Morning and Evening Prayer we read the Psalms...which cover every human condition and emotion imaginable. We read lessons from both the Old and New Testament. We begin to see how God has been interacting with his people all along. We are struck by the awesome reality that the Bible is the story of our Redemption, written for us, so we might read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest what it teaches us.

The Advent readings help us understand God's plan for saving us came true with the birth of his Son, Jesus...our Emmanuel...our God with us. At a specific time in the history of mankind...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.

Jesus tells us what to expect when he returns on the last day...his Second Advent. It will be a scary event only for those who are not ready for his return, who do not know him through the words of Scripture, or who have rejected the hope for everlasting life he offers.

Because we are people of hope...we understand Jesus' Second Coming is something we should look forward to with eager anticipation. Jesus tells us to stand up and raise our heads when we see him coming with great power and surrounded by 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.

Advent is also a time of spiritual growth and cleaning house...getting rid of those things holding us back from fully embracing the hope we have in Jesus. Incorporating daily Bible reading into our lives can help us better Prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas.

Please take advantage of this afternoon's Advent Lessons and Carols. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to re-discover the magical weaving together of Scripture and song...carrying us from prophecy to fulfillment of the Old Testament foretelling of the birth of Jesus.

Happy Bible Sunday!

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