

IV ADVENT 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

PHIL 4.4 ST JOHN 1.19



Dear God...please give us your special help...to turn away from darkness...and embrace light...now in this life...as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth...and eagerly wait for him to return.

The Advent Season is quickly coming to a close...we are compelled to look back to where we started four weeks ago...the Advent Collect in which we asked God to lead us out of darkness into the light...and consider again the Advent theme of last things first...death, judgment, heaven and hell.

- *None of us will avoid death...but as Saint Paul reminds us...we are people of hope...we don't fear death because we know it isn't the end;*
- *We will be judged by our actions...how we treat people does matter...we should always act with selfless love;*
- *Heaven is what we look forward to...that which we have yet to experience...everlasting life in God's presence;*
- *Hell is the alternative to heaven...a self-imposed sentence of being forever separated from God...not an attractive alternative by any stretch of the imagination.*

That leads us to where we are today...the Fourth Sunday in Advent. There is a sense of urgency in today's Collect...we ask God to hurry up and send his power among us...that power is Jesus...his birth is happening soon...we can't delay getting ready any longer.

There is also a sense of urgency of the happy kind in the Epistle...Paul tells us to rejoice...Jesus is coming again...get ready now. Listen to what Paul says we should be doing while we wait for Jesus to return:

- *Show a gentle attitude toward everyone;*
- *Know the Lord is coming soon;*
- *Don't worry about anything; ask God for what we need;*
- *God's peace is far beyond our understanding; it keeps our hearts*

and minds safe in union with Jesus Christ;

- *Put into practice what we have learned.*

Throughout the Advent Season we have been listening to prophecies about the First Coming of Jesus on Christmas Day and preparing for his Second Coming...which will happen according to God's timetable...not ours.

Both the First and Second comings of Jesus bring a message of hope...Jesus is coming soon...things will get better...reflected in the words of the hymns we sang at Advent Lessons and Carols.

At his first advent...Father Massey Shepherd reminds us...Jesus comes to us in humility...in the second he comes in power; in the first he came to save, in the second he comes to help and relieve.

But Advent is more than hearing prophecies and singing hymns...it's about having an ACTION PLAN...to do exactly what we're asking for in the Advent Collect...turn away from darkness...wrap ourselves in the light that is Christ.

There is a sense of urgency in today's Gospel. When he is asked if he is the promised Messiah...John the Baptist quotes the prophet Isaiah and answers,

- *"I am the voice of someone shouting in the desert: Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!"*

Make a straight path for the Lord to travel...is the Advent message...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...directly into our hearts, minds and souls...make some changes in our lives...take decisive action...embrace light and life...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...we start by living the Advent message of hope.

Advent may be coming to a close but it's not too late to implement an ACTION PLAN of getting our spiritual house in order.

Jesus is coming! Let's not waste time. Let's get ready...now.

