

## SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT 2019

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

#### FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

#### *JEREMIAH 23.5-8 St. JOHN 6.5-14*



"We'll take a cup of kindness yet...for auld lang syne"...so goes the refrain to Robert Burns' famous 18<sup>th</sup> Century poem. *Auld lang syne*...can be loosely translated for *old times sake*.

"Auld Lang Syne" is traditionally sung at the conclusion of New Year's Eve celebrations. Such celebrations often include a wistful nod to the year just ended, and they stir up hope that things will be better in the New Year, along with personal resolutions to do our part to make things better.

As well as celebrating the New Year..."Auld Lang Syne" is used to symbolize other "endings/beginnings" such as farewells, funerals, graduations and elections of new governments.

The Sunday Next before Advent is the last Sunday in the Trinity Season and the Church's New Year's Eve. The Trinity Season is a time of spiritual growth. If we haven't done as well as we could have in some areas of our spiritual lives let's not panic. This is also "Stir up Sunday"...a name it gets from the Collect.

We have an opportunity to ask God for help to get our wills "stirred up" to do what is right and pleasing to him. We also pray that God will bless the work we do. We want to make our Christian New Year's resolution a life-long commitment. We want to get our wills stirred up because Jesus, the Light of the World, is coming to us on Christmas Day, and we want to be ready to receive him into our hearts.

About 700 years before the birth of Jesus the prophet Jeremiah tried to get the wills of the people stirred up to doing what was right and pleasing to God. The people had signed contracts with pagan governments and were behaving badly. They turned away from God. Jeremiah warned them if they continued with their bad behavior they would only bring misery on themselves. He asked them to turn around and come back to God. They didn't listen to him. Jeremiah lived to see his prophecy come true when the Southern

Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC.

But Jeremiah's prophecy wasn't all doom and gloom. He told the people things were going to get better. God was going to send a king who was a descendant of David, and his name would be "The Lord Our Salvation". He would be the one who would put things right again between God and his people. He would bring them back from all over the world to live in their own land again.

Jeremiah preached a message of hope about how much God loved his people and wanted what was best for them. God's love for us is not an abstract idea or thought; it is an action. God revealed his love for the Jews by doing things for them, either directly, or through people like Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others. We often experience God's love through the actions of the people we come into contact with in our daily lives. We too can show God's love in and through our own lives.

Jesus reveals his love for people in what he does for them. In the Gospel, he took two small fish and five loaves of bread and multiplied them many times over, so no one would go home hungry. Jesus then told his disciples to gather up the food that was left so nothing would be thrown out. There were twelve baskets left...symbolizing perfection and completeness...God's plan to bring all people to himself.

We are about to turn our attention toward the most important event in human history: the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. It is God's direct interjection of himself into human history, as a baby in a manger, at a specific time, and in a specific location. It is God's love revealed to us in the flesh and blood of Jesus the baby, Jesus the King. God...learned to walk among us...so we might walk with him in heaven.

Let's make today's Collect our New Year's resolution. Stir up our wills, Lord! Get us excited about the work we are doing. Help us to be enthusiastic in telling others about the gift of your Son, Jesus, whose birth we will soon celebrate, and make the work we do truly pleasing to you and a reflection of your love.

