

## II Advent 2021

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*The Collect Rom. 15.4 St. Luke 21.25*

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God, in the same way you inspired men to write all Holy Scriptures so we could learn, inspire us to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them...help us to listen and pay attention to what we hear read in church...help us read the Bible for ourselves...help us to remember what we have heard and read...help us to keep the words of Holy Scripture close to our hearts...and let the words of the Bible keep our faith strong and alive now...while we wait with hope for everlasting life in heaven.

Today's Collect was written for the seminal 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* and echoes what Saint Paul says in the Epistle...the Scriptures were written for our learning. The Scriptures Paul is referring to is the Hebrew Bible...what we call the Old Testament. The Collect also gives today its unique Anglican nickname "Bible Sunday".

The *Book of Common Prayer* is often called the Bible in useable form...almost two-thirds of which is a direct quote from the Bible. If we look the Lectionary in the front of the *Prayer Book*...we find Psalms and Lessons appointed for every day of the Church Year. The Lectionary gives us an easy, systematic, and orderly way of reading the Bible.

2021 is the 410<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. The scholars who contributed to its publication continued in the same spirit of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer who compiled the seminal 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*...that the Liturgy and the Word of God be delivered to the people in a language they understood.

The Bible is the Good News about Jesus Christ for everyone. The Advent Season...the start of a New Church Year...the season of getting stirred up into taking action...is the perfect time for us to begin the spiritual discipline of reading the Bible every day.

If we follow the Lectionary we will read through most of the Bible during the course of the Church Year. The *Prayer Book* also gives two ways of reading the Psalms. If we follow the Lectionary, we will read through the Psalms about two times during the Church Year. If we follow the Psalter's 30-day

cycle...we will read through all 150 Psalms every month...or twelve times during the Church Year. TWELVE TIMES!

The Collect says all Holy Scriptures were written for our learning. When we read the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, we begin to see how God has been interacting with his people all along through the prophets, priests and kings of the Old Testament...the Hebrew Bible...and through the Gospel and Epistle writers of the New Testament.

We begin to understand what Saint Paul means when he tells us what was written, was written to teach us and to give us hope. God's plan for us and our hope came true with the birth of his Son, Jesus...our Emmanuel...our God with us...whose birth we will soon celebrate. It's still Advent...so let's hold off singing Christmas Carols until Christmas...then we have twelve days to sing them.

Advent is the season when we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus on Christmas Day. It's also the season we think about last things first...his Second Coming. When the Apostles saw Jesus taken up to heaven on the Ascension Day...the angels told them they would see him return in exactly the same way as they saw him leave, surrounded by clouds and light.

The Gospel tells us that when Jesus returns it will be apparent to everyone what is happening. It will be a scary event only to those who are not ready for Jesus' return. We want to get ready for the Second Coming of Jesus now by reading the Bible and applying its teachings to our lives...by coming to church and receiving Holy Communion every Sunday...and experiencing God's love now, and sharing his love with others.

Advent is the season for us to get stirred up...to take action. Let's make our Advent Resolution to diligently read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the words of Holy Scripture, so that we may receive the strength and encouragement we need...to better celebrate Jesus' First Coming on Christmas Day...and wait patiently with hope for his Second Coming with power and great might...for all to see.

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