

## IV Advent 2021

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Philippians 4.4-7 St John 1.19-28*



Advent is about life...now and forever.

We began the Advent Season with a Call to Action...in the Collect for Advent Sunday we asked God to give us his grace to avoid dark (thoughts) and the dark works that come from them...and embrace light like a spiritual suit of armor protecting us...and do this now!

The Collect for today the Fourth Sunday in Advent increases the urgency in our prayer for God's help...we get ourselves off course in the race we are running...we need your help now.

There is also a sense of urgency in Paul's Letter to the Philippians...it's an Action Plan filled with hope we should follow:

- *We are to always rejoice in the Lord;*
- *Know the Lord is coming soon...things will get better;*
- *Show a gentle attitude toward everyone...wouldn't we want to be treated in the same way;*
- *Don't worry about anything; ask God for what we need...he wants us to trust him to provide for our needs;*
- *God's peace is far beyond our understanding; it keeps our hearts and minds safe in union with Jesus Christ.*

The Advent Season is certainly about the four last things...death, judgment, heaven and hell...but it's also about how we are living our lives now:

- *We can't avoid death...but we don't fear it because we know it isn't the end;*
- *It does make a difference how we treat people...we should always act with selfless love...we will be judged by our actions;*
- *Heaven is everlasting life in the light of Christ and presence of God;*
- *Hell is everlasting darkness and separation from God's love.*

When it comes to Heaven and Hell we need correct some bad theology about who gets to go to Heaven and who ends up in Hell. God

gives us the tools we need to live according to his plan. But he doesn't force Heaven on us any more than he "sends" people to Hell because they said a bad word. The ticket on the Heaven Express is free...but we do have to read the fine print...or maybe not so fine print...it's the Action Plan called the Advent Collect.

Application of the Advent Collect to our lives is the counter measure to what our late beloved Rector, Father John Altberg, characterized as the escalating acceptance of the Culture of Death...and front-page headlines devoid of any future. Advent is about embracing the Culture of Life available to us now and forever.

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.

We get from the Gospel now is the time to take action. John the Baptist was an itinerant preacher with a large following. The priests and Levites feared him and asked him if he was the promised Messiah. John emphatically denied he was and quoted Isaiah:

- *"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...Isaiah and John's message...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...directly into our hearts, minds and souls...make some changes...take decisive action...make a straight path for the Lord to travel...we start by living the Advent message of hope.

The Advent Season may be coming to a close but it's not too late for us to put the Advent Collect into Action. We can take the spiritual suit of armor out of the closet and put it on now...King Jesus is coming...and we want to be ready for him.

Advent is ultimately about life...now and forever. Let's start living!

