

II Advent 2022

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Romans 15.4-13 St. Luke 21.25-33*

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Everything written in the Scriptures...our friend Saint Paul tells us...was written to teach us...so we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us.

Saint Paul's words inspired Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to write the Collect for the seminal *1549 Book of Common Prayer*. It reflects Cranmer's commitment to acquainting the people with the contents and teachings of the Bible. It is the reason today is commonly called "Bible Sunday".

The "Scriptures" Saint Paul is talking about is the Hebrew Bible...what we call the Old Testament. The Advent lessons teach us the Old Testament prophecies point to Jesus as the promised Savior who puts us back into a right relationship with God the Father.

One of the greatest treasures we have is our *Book of Common Prayer*. The *Book of Common Prayer* has often been called "the Bible in usable form". Two-thirds of the *Book of Common Prayer* is made up of the Epistles, Gospels and Psalms, which come directly from the Bible.

The word *Bible* was translated from the original Koine or Common Greek of the day into Medieval Latin *Biblia*..."the Book". And, indeed, the Bible is a very big book! Many of us find reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the words of Scripture a daunting task. Where do we begin?

The Lectionary at the front of the *Book of Common Prayer* provides us with a neat and orderly way of reading the Bible. There are Psalms and Old Testament and New Testament Lessons appointed for Morning and Evening Prayer every day of the Church Year, including the Holy Days.

The hope through the patience and encouragement Saint Paul is talking about we get from reading the Bible is knowing for certain we will get to be with Jesus in heaven some day. Jesus promised before his Ascension he would return some day. "Don't worry", he said. "I've gone to my Father's house to get a place ready for you. And one day I will come back to take you to heaven to be with me".

Jesus said we will know when he is coming back because there will be lots of signs. Earthquakes, floods, and famines will take place. Countries will fight wars with each other. Some people will be so afraid they will faint.

We see all of these things happening now. We don't have to be afraid because we are people of hope. We believe Jesus when he said he will come back some day to take those who believe in him back to heaven with him. We don't know when Jesus will return...so we must be patient.

There is a children's song from our Sunday School Days that tells the story so well..."Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so". We can spend some time during the Advent Season applying the simple message of this song to our lives.

We can listen to Saint Paul's instructions echoed in the Collect and "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the words of the Bible. It's not such a daunting task when we use the *Book of Common Prayer* as a Bible Study Guide.

If we need more encouragement during our Advent journey to Bethlehem...we can turn to Jesus' own words in the Gospel. We will see him come with power and glory...and we will know God's Kingdom is about to happen.

Heaven and earth...Jesus tells us will pass away...but his words will never pass away.

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