

II Advent 2023  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*The Collect Romans 15.4-13*  
*St. Luke 21.25-33*



Welcome to Bible Sunday!

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent was written for the *1549 Book of Common Prayer*. It reflects what Paul says in the Epistle...that everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us...so we might have hope through the patience and encouragement the Scriptures give us.

The “Scriptures” Paul is talking about is the Hebrew Bible---the Old Testament. Paul and the other Apostles were busy writing down words of hope and encouragement themselves---the letters that form a major part of the New Testament.

The Collect is rich in its imagery of “hearing, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting” all the Holy Scriptures. The key word here is “all”. When we make prayer and Bible reading part of our daily lives, we are doing what Paul and the Collect say. We are “embracing, and ever holding fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life”, which God has given us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Where do we begin a course in daily prayer and Bible reading? The place we go to is the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Prayer Book is one of the greatest treasures we have. It has often been called “the Bible in usable form”. Two-thirds of the *Prayer Book* is made up of the Epistles and Gospels. The Psalms are not part of the *Prayer Book* but are printed there for our convenience.

If we turn to the Lectionary at the front of the *Prayer Book* (Pages x-xlv), we will find a systematic and orderly way of reading through the Bible, beginning with Advent Sunday and ending with the Sunday Next Before Advent. There is also a section for Saints’ Days, Thanksgiving, Independence Day and funeral masses.

The hope we get from reading the Bible is in knowing for certain we will get to be with Jesus in heaven some day. Jesus promised before his Ascension he would return some day. Jesus always keeps his promises. “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 be in heaven where I am...and I am telling you the truth!”

The Advent Season is a journey from the Old Testament prophecies foretelling the birth of the Messiah to the fulfillment of those prophecies in the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ birth. This is also the time we get ready for the Second Advent...Jesus’ return at the end of time. We don’t know when that will happen. It will happen according to God’s own timetable...not ours. Trying to figure it out so we can get ready is a waste of precious time. We should live our lives as if Jesus were to return this very moment.

Jesus said we will know when he is about to return because there will be “strange things” happening to the sun, the moon and the stars. Earthquakes, floods, and famines will take place. Countries will fight wars with each other. Some people will be so overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty by what they are seeing they will faint.

Jesus tells us not to worry about what we see happening. There is no question we don’t like seeing countries at war. We live in “earthquake country”, but none of us are looking forward to the next “big one”. We’re saddened by how cruel people can be toward each other. But we don’t have to despair, because we believe Jesus when he said all this will happen before he comes back. And we believe he will come back some day to take those who believe in him back to heaven with him.

There is a Latin axiom we have talked about before: *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi...as we pray, so we believe, so we live*. In a 2019 Trinity Season sermon, I suggested we add a fourth part to the axiom...*Lex Docendi...so we teach*.

How we pray, reflects what we believe, governs how we live, and what we teach because we know by faith what we read in the Bible is true and gives us hope.

Happy Bible Sunday!

