

Lessons for The Second Sunday in Advent

December 4, 2022

Psalm 72:1-7 ~ *A prayer for the king, expressing the hope for righteousness and justice.*

Isaiah 11:1-10 ~ *A branch from Jesse's line will usher in the age of God's righteousness.*

Romans 15:4-13 ~ *Even the nations will hope in Jesus, the root of Jesse and the hope of Israel.*

Matthew 3:1-12 ~ *John's call to repentance brought hope that God's kingdom was coming.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God's Commitment to Hope

With God's people in captivity in Babylon, Isaiah held before them the hope of restoration to Jerusalem with peace and security. Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the Root of Jesse, who rules over the nations and draws Jew and Gentile into his Church. Because the Kingdom of Heaven was appearing in Jesus, John urged people to prepare for the Messiah's coming by committing their lives to Him and showing their commitment through righteous living.

A PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, stir up my heart with your grace so that I may live confidently in the hope you have given me through the promise of Christ's kingdom. Keep me ready to welcome him at all times so that I may live faithfully in the fellowship of your holy people. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: John's call summons us to use our resources to further the reign of Jesus' righteousness in this world. When we can hear him over the din of our own expectations, we will be instruments of God's hope.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, make us instruments of hope to thwart despair.
Turn us away from goals that hurt Your kingdom.
Use us and all these gifts to show the world You care
As all your faithful people wait Your time to come. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Our plans and expectations in this world often cover up the hope of God's kingdom. While God judges the poor and the oppressed with the word of his righteousness, we evaluate our situation with what appears good to us or what sounds like it makes good sense. John calls us to repentance and summons us to enlist in the one people of God, where He works righteousness through Jesus the Christ, the hope of Israel and the redemption of the nations.

Questions to Consider: How is Advent hope like the saying, "Free beer tomorrow!"?

- Why is a shoot from a tree stump a good image for the day of God's righteousness?
- How can hope in Christ Jesus unite Jew and Gentile in a life of harmony?
- What do you think moved the people of John's day to come out to hear him?
- Why in repentance a sign of hope?

Bonus on next page: Two poems contrast our transitory hopes with God's eternal promise.

We Had Hopes

You walked along a trail with me.
I held your tiny hand.
We talked about things yet to be.
You saw a world so grand.
Now you are gone ahead of me.
In life I am alone.
Our hopes are just a memory,
Reflections of my own

Gilbert Franke, 12/4/18

Simeon's Hope

There in the temple Simeon was thrilled
to see the promise of the Lord fulfilled!
He didn't only happen by that day;
the Spirit spoke to urge him on his way.
The nations wrapped in darkness see this light
and drawn to Him, are carried through the night.
So Simeon held the baby to his heart
and knew that he was ready to depart.
Within the shadows of our sinful blight
His glory shines to turn our wrongs to right.
The Spirit calls for lives of faith today,
and eagerly, like Simeon, we obey.
In Him we have a certain hope, distilled
from every covenant God ever willed.

- Gilbert A Franke, 12/30/08