

Lessons for The First Sunday in Advent

December 3, 2017

Psalm 80:1-7 ~ A prayer for God's restoration of Israel after his punishment through the aggression of an enemy

Isaiah 64:1-9 ~ We wait eagerly for the Lord to come set things right with our world and in our lives.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 ~ We wait eagerly for Christ's return, knowing that He will keep us secure in faith.

Mark 13:24-37 ~ We wait eagerly for the Son of Man even in distressing times, because we know His love.

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Peace and Patience in our Waiting

In spite of the fact that our lives are so hectic, we are often waiting -- for healing, for comfort, for peace. With Isaiah we cry out, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down!" We must be ready at all times for that rending appearance of our Lord. We can be patient in our waiting when we recognize with St. Paul that only God's mercy in Christ will keep us blameless on the day of Christ's return.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord, give me patience in my waiting that I may be ready for Christ's return knowing that you have claimed me for yourself. Let each new day remind me that this world is drawing closer to your kingdom of glory. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Through our stewardship God makes us channels of blessings to many, partners with Him and co-workers in ministry – investors in an eternal estate!

OFFERING PRAYER: Gracious God, You send the Prince of Peace.
Make us ready for His coming,
as we use these gifts to share His peace
and in our lives express His loving. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: When conditions in society around us and in the distress within us make us shout with anxious cry, "How long, O Lord?" we are strengthened by the promise that the One we await is the One who loved us so much that He gave His life for us. Although everything else is questionable, one thing is certain: our Savior is the Lord who has already reconciled us to Himself.

SEASONAL NOTE: Most people find Advent a difficult time---the world around us rushes headlong into Christmas and the Church seems strangely out of sync with the Advent themes of waiting and preparation. This is a time of quiet yet purposeful waiting for the right time to celebrate God's gracious gift in the birth of His Son in human flesh.

BONUS:

As Lightning Rends the Sky

Isaiah 64:1-9

As lightning rends the sky with thunder crash
and mountains quake with molten lava flow,
we yearn for God to come with power and dash
the wretched curse of sin. Then all would know
there is no other God! The prophets told
the awesome deeds that glorified His name.
God's saving actions made His people bold,
and they in turn were proud to spread His fame.
But now in gentle form and human skin
God comes to melt our crusty hearts today.
He holds us in His hand, and once again
He turns our broken lives like potter's clay.
Trust God to mold you in His will, and then
He'll fashion you according to His plan.

– Gilbert A. Franke, 11/18/08

Days of Advent

Since Christmas is a busy time,
the days of Advent slow us down.
We catch our breath and clear our mind;
we learn to listen for the sound
of peace, a word of hope, a cry
of joy, and melodies of love.
We pause a moment, softly sigh,
and wait for mercies from above.
We find it all in Jesus' birth
for He's the Savior of the earth.

– Gilbert A. Franke, 12/03/2010