

Today, is the first Sunday in Advent and marks the beginning of a new Church year. In Advent, we are reminded that the time of salvation is near at hand when God will gather all nations into his kingdom and its peace.

We are exhorted to watch, wait and be ready for the coming of Jesus into our lives and into all of creation.

This is truly a beautiful time a time of expectancy that sets a tone that should always resonate in our lives.

During Advent, we reflect on the coming of Christ and our understanding of the coming of Christ, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:4,8):

- his coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him (John 1:10)
- The old Testament revelation of Christ and how God prepared for the coming of Jesus born some 2021 years ago, in Bethlehem.
- his coming into our lives, now, through the Holy Spirit.
- we watch and wait for the time when he comes in glory.

We base our reflections for the journey upon the kingship of Jesus

“You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice”.

(John 18:37)

Active Hope

The Season of Advent, is a season of waiting, longing, promise, and preparation.

Today's readings reassure us with God's promises, and we wait actively by engaging in God's justice in the world.

God's presence and absence.

There is a strange paradox to our Christian life that is highlighted at this time. God is present in our life, yet we do not experience him as fully present - He does not seem to be fully present. As St. Paul says: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.” (1 Cor 13:12)

One day the dawn will come. “because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. {12} The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.” We will know God as he knows us.



To help us prepare, ADVENT, like Lent is meant to be a time of spiritual discipline, of fasting and self denial and a greater attentiveness to prayer. Amidst the hustle, the bustle and all the feasting, let's set times aside for prayer, for abstinence and/or doing someone else a good turn, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas - the coming of Jesus.

Ideally, this comment should be provided with the readings that are sent out with the pew sheet. Practically, this is difficult, given the pew sheet is finished on the Thursday before the Sunday.

These comments are to encourage you to read the Scriptures reflectively, attentive to the questions that they raise for you and the responses that you have to them.

Jeremiah 33:14-16

- What impact does the fulfilment of prophecy have on your faith?
- Reflect on how you experience Christ revealed in the Old Testament
- What are the most important issues of 'justice and righteousness' today?

Much of the book of Jeremiah contains hard words of judgement spoken against Judah, Israel's southern kingdom. The Babylonians have just levelled Jerusalem, and those in Judah who survived the attack must have believed that God had abandoned them. Yet, in these verses, Jeremiah speaks of God's continuing promise to the people, bringing a message of hope into otherwise gloomy tidings. God will keep the covenant with the people, despite their betrayal. Without the redemptive promise these verses bring, the rest of the book's chapters would appear unrelentingly harsh. Jeremiah 33:14-16 reminds listeners of the new and "righteous branch." This righteousness, however, is not to be embodied in one individual; rather, it is a righteousness given to the community. Jeremiah tells those who are waiting for redemption that their hope resides in being God's people, and in living lives of justice and faithfulness. This promise is with us still.

For over 20 years, Jeremiah insisted that the people of Judah remain faithful to God, though he was arrested as a traitor and vehemently contradicted by false prophets. But Jeremiah's waiting was never passive. Hope, and a stubborn faith in God's promises, spurred Jeremiah to continue to speak, confident that God's future would arrive.

Although, we might at times feel life in the world can seem so complex that we find it hard to believe that one-day God's 'righteousness and justice' will prevail. The Scriptures ultimately encourage us that no matter what, we can trust in God's love, in His faithfulness and His ultimate purpose for the whole of creation. This trust is strengthened, to some extent, by reflecting upon the fulfillment of prophecy in the Scriptures. A detailed study that is best undertaken as we reflect upon the scriptures, weekly, if not daily. As we seek to see the whole of Scripture and particularly, the New Testament, in the light of Jesus coming, his death and resurrection.

Psalm 25:1-10

In the midst of trouble, we often cry out to God in prayer, waiting for a sign of hope. The psalmist also prays, waits, and gathers courage, recalling God's goodness shown in the past. The person who first spoke this psalm and those who first sang it depended upon God in the face of their challengers. We are reminded that even in our aching expectations and inarticulate longings, God is acting; bringing to fruition all that is good and just.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

- Does Paul's description of his prayer life encourage you?
- Do we seek to 'abound in love for one another and for all?'
- Have we thought of the Second Coming involving the saints as well?

Paul, the writer of this letter, is anxiously waiting to visit the church in Thessalonica. He would love to see the faces of the people intended to be encouraged by his words. In the meantime, Paul commends their faith, praying that their love will increase and that they will be strengthened. Paul commends to the Thessalonians the very things all of us need to travel towards that future, offering encouragement, gratitude, and a deep love rooted in Christ.

In other words, whatever we see in the world, we are called to live faithful lives seeking to be loving and prayerful and walking the way of holiness.

Luke 21:25-38

- Do we/I truly look for the 'day of the Lord', the time when Jesus comes again in glory?
- In what ways do we seek to 'Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'? Are we watchful in our daily lives?
- The signs of the times: adversity in the world, adversity in our lives; how does Christ come to us?
- Our experience of God's Word
- To what extent do 'things of the world' weigh my/our hearts down?

The gospel of Luke was written after the Letter to the Thessalonians. Since Thessalonians was written, the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans and the dispersion of its inhabitants had begun. It was a time of crisis. Many believers, Jews and Christians alike, hoped that the turmoil would be the final tribulation before the coming of the Messiah in power. Luke's readers, like the Thessalonians a generation or two before, were waiting for "the Son of Man to come with power and great glory" (v. 27). They expected dominion to be given to God's Anointed One to judge the nations and rule with justice and peace.

The Son of Man was coming, not only to judge individuals and nations. This event would be marked by "signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars" because it would be

cosmic in significance. The seeming turmoil of the heavens was to be a sign that a new creation was in the making.

The signs, however, are ambiguous. Fear and foreboding are common reactions to the turmoil a new age can bring. Yet the gospel tells people of faith to see the chaos as the moment before God's word brings a new creation to birth. Redemption is drawing near just as certainly as new leaves on a fig tree signal summer. Jesus' disciples are to remain alert to the signs of God's reign coming.

With these prophecies of Jesus comes a challenge. Be ready, always on the watch. Live each day as God's precious gift. Live each day prayerful, constantly attentive to God in everything that happens. Live a life for God that we may be ready to stand before Him. (My notes on Meditation might help with this)

Advent is a reminder that we live in the "not yet" time. How do we remain faithful to God when our hopes are as yet unfulfilled? Like Jeremiah, our waiting is filled with purpose and a certainty that even in the midst of chaos and struggle, righteousness will prevail insofar as we ourselves embody that righteousness.

A compilation by (Rev) Bruce Charles – Locum Priest, Drouin.

A NOTE ON ADVENT BY ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM THE TWOFOLD COMING OF CHRIST

We preach not one coming of Christ, but a second also, far more glorious than the first. The first revealed the meaning of his patient endurance; the second brings with it the crown of the divine kingdom.

Generally speaking, everything that concerns our Lord Jesus Christ is twofold. His birth is twofold: one of God before time began; the other of the Virgin in the fullness of time. His descent is twofold: one unperceived, like the dew falling on the fleece; the other, before the eyes of all, is yet to happen.

In his first coming he was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger. In his Second Coming he is clothed with light as with a garment. In his first coming he bore the cross, despising its shame; he will come a second time in glory accompanied by the hosts of angels.

It is not enough for us, then, to be content with his first coming; we must wait in hope for his Second Coming. What we said at his first coming, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord', we shall repeat at his last coming. Running out with the angels to meet the Master we shall cry out in adoration, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

