

Advent I 2023

Sermon- Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 13.8-14 Matthew 21.1-13



Get rid of dark things...embrace light; now during our life here on earth, when Jesus came to visit us in humility; so on the last day when he returns in glorious light to judge the living and dead; we will rise to immortal life through him. God help us to get ready for Jesus to come back...now!

The Advent Collect was composed for the *1549 Book of Common Prayer*. The rubric (the *italicized* words printed under the Collect) directs us to say the Collect **every day** during Advent until Christmas Eve. That means we are to pay special attention to what the Collect says. Advent is the Church's New Year's Day. The Advent Collect is our New Year's Resolution which we should take seriously...now...while we have time.

The word **advent** comes from the Latin word **adventus** and means **coming**. Advent is the season during which we prepare our hearts, minds and souls for the **First Coming** of Jesus on Christmas Day, and look forward with hope and expectation to his **Second Coming** at the end of time.

Advent is certainly the time we're busy buying Christmas presents and looking for that perfect tree (mine lives in the downstairs closet...until I just plug it in). But Advent is also the time we think about Last Things First...Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell...

*...None of us can avoid death,
...We will all be judged by how we treat others,
...Heaven is what the writer of Hebrews says we hope for,
...Hell is the other place.*

Saint Paul tells us we are supposed to behave in a certain way. We are to avoid those things that lead us into doing dark things and away from embracing the Light of Christ. People sneak around after dark thinking they can get away doing bad things and not get caught. They usually do...and since we can't hide from God...it's better for us not to try. God is not out to get us when we mess up...we do that all the time. He does give us his grace to help us not go places we shouldn't.

Saint Paul says we should walk as children who are wearing "arms of light" (armor in the KJV). We "put on" the Light that is Christ at our baptisms...and the grace we received at our baptisms is continually renewed. The spiritual "clothes" we wear helps put into practice the Great Commandment to love God and love our neighbors.

Secular New Year's resolutions often involve making a commitment to do better in the coming year. Our Spiritual Advent Sunday New Year's resolution compels us to take a look at how we have conducted ourselves over the past year in our love of God and our neighbor. We need to ask God to help us do better. Paul tells us now is the time to wake up from our Spiritual sleep, to get "stirred up" now, while we have time.

The Gospel is the Palm Sunday story from Matthew about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey. It seems out of place for Advent Sunday. It is the fulfillment of the prophecy from Zechariah that the Messiah would ride into the city on a donkey. Jesus shows us how much God loves us by being born in a barn; his humble ride on the donkey a message for all who would see and hear...his Kingdom was not here on earth...it is in heaven. The Gospel is about Jesus coming suddenly. We want to be ready for him at his First Coming and his Second Coming.

We should never be afraid to be seen doing God's work, not because we want people to notice us, but because there are no secrets in the work we do. Church work is not secret work...we don't sneak around in the dark. We have nothing to hide. Remember we are the best advertisements for God and his Son Jesus, and we always want to make sure we live our lives according to his will.

The Advent Season is all getting rid of dark thing and embracing the Light that is Christ. For the next four weeks we will be getting ourselves ready to receive the most perfect Christmas gift ever...Emmanuel...God himself made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

We need to get ready to welcome Jesus, now, while we have time. He brings to us peace that passes anything we can imagine...and he brings us hope!

