

II Advent 2025

Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

The Collect Rom. 15.4-13 St. Luke 21.25-33

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Forty years ago this day, the Second Sunday in Advent, we celebrated the first Mass in our historic Carpenter Gothic church building. We made a bold and daring statement. We affirmed in the words of the Affirmation of Saint Louis, "that the Church of our Fathers, sustained by the Most Holy Trinity, lives yet."

We stated our determination "to continue in the Catholic Faith, Apostolic Order, Orthodox Worship and Evangelical Witness of the Traditional Anglican Church, doing all things necessary for the continuance of the same." Forty years ago we began a mission that continues this day. For that, we must truly give thanks and praise to Almighty God.

The Bible has always been an important part of the spiritual life of Saint Joseph Parish. The Collect tells us God has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. The key word is **all**...everything written in both the Old and New Testaments was written so we might read them for ourselves, remember what we hear and read in Church, keep the words close to our hearts, and let the truth of what we read keep our faith strong.

The Collect has given today its unique nickname "Bible Sunday". Most of first learned about the Bible when we were children...in Bible stories and songs. Remember, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so"? Before we could even read the words, we knew we could hear about Jesus and his love for us in the Bible. Later, we read and studied the Bible and tried to apply its message of love and hope to our lives.

The English word "Bible" is derived from the Greek word "*biblios*" and means "*book*". A question I often get asked is, "Where do I begin"? That's a good question. We can start with the opening words of Genesis, "In the beginning". But the Book of Common Prayer gives us a neat and orderly way of "reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting" the Bible without being overwhelmed by what seems like a daunting task.

The Lectionary printed in front of the Prayer Book gives us Psalms and Old and New Testament lessons for Morning and Evening Prayer for every day of the year. Making Morning and Evening Prayer a regular part of our daily life of prayer helps us stay focused on God's love for us

revealed in Jesus. Regular reading of the Bible gives us the tools we need to take God's love out into the world...and as the Collect says gives us the hope we will one day be with him in heaven.

When we read the whole Bible we begin to see how God has been interacting with his people throughout history, through the many messengers of the Old and New Testaments. Saint Paul tells us in the Epistle everything that was written was written to teach us and to give us hope. God's plan for us and our hope came true with the birth of his Son, Jesus, our "*Emmanuel*", our "*God with us*". At a specific point in the history of humankind, God became like us and walked among us so that one day we might walk with him in heaven forever.

Advent is the season when we prepare to celebrate the first time Jesus came to us on Christmas Day. It's also the season we talk about his Second Coming. Jesus promised he will come again to take those who believe in him back to heaven with him. When the Apostles saw Jesus taken up to heaven on the Ascension Day, angels told them they would see him return in exactly the same way as they saw him leave, surrounded by clouds and light.

The Gospel tells us that when Jesus returns it will be apparent to everyone what is happening. It will be scary only to those who aren't ready or don't believe. We want to get ready for the Second Coming of Jesus now by reading the Bible and applying its teachings to our lives, by coming to church and receiving Holy Communion every Sunday, and experiencing God's love now, and sharing his love with others.

Forty years ago we began a mission in a beautiful and historic church building. On this Second Sunday in Advent, "Bible Sunday", we must always remind ourselves the building is not the church...we are the Church. Our mission to spread the Good News about Jesus will not end until he comes back as he promised he would. Until then, our urgent Advent prayer is found in the last verses of Revelation...

..."So be it. Come, Lord Jesus."

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