

1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT

November 27, 2022

COLLECT: ALMIGHTY GOD, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE LESSONS: First Lesson: Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm: 122

Second Lesson: Romans 13:11-14

Gospel: Matthew 21:36-44

THE SERMON: Good morning, welcome to ADVENT 1. You will notice that the altar colors and the clergy vestments are now blue. So are the banners. Looking at the floral arrangement, I call them the John the Baptist flowers. They are reeds, weeds and lights. They signify John the Baptist baptizing and preaching at the Jordan River. The lights represent the appearance of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to be baptized.

There are four candles which we will light on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. The four candles represent the four words or themes for Advent. They are peace, hope, love and joy. The center white candle, the Christmas candle is to be lit on Christmas eve signifying the birth of Christ.

Advent begins the church season of waiting. We are awaiting the birth of the Christ child on Christmas. If you think about it, the baby should not be in the creche until Christmas Day.

Like John the Baptist we too are waiting on the coming of Christ, the Savior, the Messiah. We though are waiting for his second coming. During this church year, the focus will be on the ministry of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Matthew.

The bishop, in the Diocesan newsletter, gives an impressive explanation and history of Advent plus she describes resources for you to personally experience Advent.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is talking to his disciples about the final days, the apocalypse. He is describing how it will be when the Lord comes again to gather up the righteous. He tells them no one knows the day or hour this will happen. People may be working side by side and one may be taken and the other left alone.

Jesus tells his disciples they must be prepared for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour.

How does what Jesus is teaching his disciples show itself in your life? He will go on to tell them that upon his death he will go home to his Father and prepare a place for them. Then one day, he will come for them so that they can also be at home with him in his Father's house.

This is the promise that Christians are preparing themselves for; to go home to heaven to be with Jesus. In some churches as people testify and give their testimonies they will say, "I want to make heaven my home."

How do they prepare themselves? They do just what you are doing. They gather, listen to and learn from scripture. They treat others as they want to be treated. They have a sense of fairness and what they don't want done to

them, they will not do to others. They will not keep score of the times a person may have wronged them. Instead, they will forgive them.

Forgive, forgive them? Our society teaches us that we must be strong, we must not let anyone take advantage of us, we must fight back. We must not let anyone walk all over us. If we don't defend ourselves, we may be called names, like wimp.

But Jesus tells us through lessons of the Bible to turn the other cheek. If I do, won't I get smacked there too?

Ours is a very complicated world. We want to be strong and protective of those and that which we love. We want to fight back. We don't want to wimp out.

We are told to love others, our neighbors as ourselves. We are told if we follow God's Commandments, the 10 Commandments then we will live lives that are acceptable to God. Not only that, but when Christ comes again, we will be in that number that he takes to the heavenly place in his Father's house that has been prepared for us.

One thing is certain, we will leave this earth, each of us will die. So, let's prepare ourselves. Let's read and listen to the words of the Bible. The Bible has been known to be the book of ***BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH.***

So, brothers and sisters, let us in this Advent season and at all times prepare and live our lives so that we are ready to meet Jesus when he comes.

Amen.

