

**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 life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Lessons:** Isaiah 6:1-9

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

1 Corinthians 1

Mark 13:24-37

**Sermon:** This begins the season of Advent; we prepare for the coming of Christ. In prior Gospel lessons we have been told to be watchful and ready for we don't know the hour he will come. The prophets foretold of a Messiah, the Anointed One coming to bring judgment. He would separate and reward the righteous by taking them into his father's house. The unrighteous would be cast into a burning fire where there would be gnashing of teeth.

In today's Gospel Jesus is speaking to his disciples also about the coming of the Messiah, he calls him the Son of Man. He tells them to keep alert because no one knows the time he will come, not angels, nor the Son only the Father.

When God created the world, he looked at it and said all was good. He created man in his image and put him in charge of tending to the world. At first, God was pleased with man, he was obedient. Later man was hoodwinked by Satan, the snake the embodiment of all that is evil. Man disobeyed God and injected sin into the world.

God now looked at a different relationship with man and let him deal with problems and the harshness of life. God didn't go away and quit caring. He watched as man continued to sin, placing his will and desires above that of God. Finally, God decided to end the world and start all over.

Even, as he washed everything away in the flood, he still had compassion for man. He saw the one man, Noah, who had been faithful in spite of the corruption going on around him. God would save Noah and his family and use them to restart the world. He also promised never to destroy the world again by flood.

The author, James Baldwin, and many philosophers said it would be the fire next time. Indeed, we are afraid of nuclear proliferation. We don't want everyone to have nuclear weapons.

Today we live in time of uncertainty. We fear the worst, but hope our actions will provide good outcomes. We see God in the Old Testament as a god of vengeance, he punished people for their misdoings and many conditions of man were seen as God taking retribution for man's sinning.

Today, we have moved beyond that, the Messiah has come and he came stressing love, the love of God for mankind. Instead of punishment and kicking butt, God offers second chances and forgiveness. God doesn't want to destroy mankind or the world. He only wants us to live righteous lives, loving Him and others.

Advent is that period of the church year that we commemorate the appearance of the Messiah. In his first appearance he worked with his disciples to teach us how to live and love. He instituted the Eucharist and told us that as we break bread and drink the wine, it becomes his body and a part of us. He died on the cross and absolved man of his sins signifying that we will always have God's love.

Now in this season of Advent, we are waiting for the second coming of the Messiah, Jesus. We are told to be ready for we don't know when he will come again. In the midst of all the turmoil, we have hope that God will, one day again, send his son so that the children of God will be reunited with their Savior.

Let us prepare ourselves by being the very best people we can be. Let us learn the lessons that Jesus taught in the parables, hear his words in holy scripture and look at the examples he gave to us of living. Let us not cast stones, but instead use those hands to lift up. Let us look for the Christ in all the people that we meet knowing that the good we do to them; we are also doing it to him.

This time in our lives it is indeed a difficult time, we are dealing with the pandemic, churches are closed, we can't worship together, our secular lives are disrupted, but there is the hope that one day this will all be over. Already vaccines and medicines are being developed. This is God at work inspiring man to be creative and healing. Even in the midst of bad times, God is there.

This Advent we should say, "Come Lord Jesus, we sure do need you now!"

Rev. Lionel