

First Sunday in Advent  
November 28, 2021

“The days are coming,” says the Lord, “when I will fulfill the promises I have made.” Life in this world is filled with turmoil, trials, and tribulation. It is easy to focus upon the troubles, but we are called to look forward. Where is your hope? To what are you looking forward?

This life does have many things for which we are to be thankful. Have we not just celebrated a time where families gather, rejoicing in the goodness of God? Don't look at what our culture is doing, look at the goodness that the celebration of Thanksgiving is supposed to be. It is a time where we do relish the joy of family, friends, and the bounty of God's provision. That celebration is a reminder for us to look to the One who provides for all of our needs. We are born into fallen humanity, but are reborn to live in the power God gives by grace to become children of the Heavenly Father.

We are to be thankful people amidst all that goes on around us. I am thankful that you gather in this place. I am thankful for the faithful who, in generations past, have provided this place which we call our church home. The church is about people. People from every tribe, tongue, folk, and nation are gathered together in the grace of Jesus to be empowered to become His bride, the church. God is creating something marvelous right in our midst and before our eyes. From the ordinary, God is creating extraordinary things. But life in this world sometimes clouds our eyes.

There are those who say that these words are doom and gloom. The truth feels that way sometimes. There is truth and then there is wishful thinking. This world is steeped in wishful thinking. Someone will tell me, “I don't believe in God,” to which I respond, “I'm pretty sure He's not stopped believing in you.” You see, it does not matter what we think, it matters what God thinks because we exist because He spoke us into existence. Do you realize that everything that happens to you, God knew beforehand. He has a reason for everything, so take comfort in His promises. Do not get caught up in wanting things the way You want them to be, but in the truth that You are in the Lord's hands and that His promise to You is more sure than anything you touch or see.

Think about this past year. Is it not true that we have experienced what Jesus is talking about? Our culture is faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world. Let's face it, we're often not sure what to believe. We are hammered all day long with accounts of this, that, and the other thing. But, “he said, she said, that's not true, it's this and not that” hits us all the day long. Listen, the word of the Lord is forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the word of the Lord. What then should we trust? Trust in the One who spoke all things into what we call existence. The waves will roar and the earth be distressed, but great is the One who created the world.

The day will come when all shall see the Lord coming in power. Do we not say each week, Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again? Yes! This is true. We are reminded that our Lord has gone for a time to prepare so that where He is we may also be. What does Jesus say? “Let not your hearts be troubled.” He also says, “Do not be anxious.” Yes, our Lord has told us these things before they come to pass so that we would not become anxious as those who have no hope become anxious.

The world shouts back, “No, I don't want it to be this or that.” As trouble approaches, we are to raise our heads because we have hope. We know that this world is in trouble. It has been

since Adam and Eve left the garden. There have been wars and rumors of wars all along. Natural calamity has come and gone. We have been told that these things must take place. We have also been told that these are but the first signs. Everything will come in its time. What Jesus reminds us to do is to see the signs.

Last Week, the first snow fell. Winter is coming. Think about this for a moment. I know, some are blessed to be able to head off to the south for the winter – and they do. It just told us that it will soon be winter and the short, snowy days will be upon us. But is your hope like that of the pagans who became frantic and wondered if the gods weren't going to just end our days? No, we know that each of the seasons come and go. Winter will give way to spring, summer, and then the cycle will begin again with the Fall. We know these things, because we see the signs and understand them. So also, we are to see the signs of the heavenly things which Jesus has given us.

Jesus said, "Believe in God, believe also in me." "Look to the fig tree," Jesus said. The stark twigs bud, then bloom. The fig grows and then it is ready for harvest. So also, in this life, we go through the stages of life, each pointing to the grand purpose of our Lord, King, and God as we are prepared to join with Him forever, seeing face to face and knowing even as we have always been known.

There are no second-generation Christians. We know that. Each must come on their own into the invitation of Jesus to abide in Him and He in them. When Jesus spoke of these happening before this generation passes away, He was speaking of this time of grace in which all who are born in this age of sin have the invitation to come in the way of Christ to become united with Him by faith and through grace. Indeed, there is an age to come when the Lord will wipe away every tear, where there will be no more pain, suffering, or crying. That is the age to come. We are here in the age of the last generation. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of the Lord will not. Take comfort in that. I know the church – not just here, but across what some have called the first world – has diminished. These things must take place. It is not yet the end. You and I will know it when it comes. Whether it is just us on our last day in this age, or that we are standing when Jesus returns really doesn't matter. My hope is not in "How," but in "Who." Jesus is our King and Savior.

He warns us to be on guard so that our hearts are not weighed down by the troubles of this world. It is so tempting to look around and see how so many seem to be living just for the moment, seeking dissipation and drunkenness. Drunk on pleasure, or whatever numbs the mind, unthinking, many go through the motions seeking meaning. You have meaning. You have been created in the image of God and have been baptized into the promise of redemption. Behold, your redemption draws near. To not be trapped by this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind in the eternal hope which is yours through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Be one the alert and learn how to pray at all times. Not praying that God will do this or that, but that our Lord will keep you faithful through all that comes in your life. We need His strength, for we are tossed about by the storms of this world. He is more than faithful and will uphold you in the power of His might. Do not be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind. Jesus is coming. We have His word. In what do you hope? My hope is based upon Jesus and His righteousness. No matter the things that happen in this world, He has promised good to those who love Him. Live with the hope of Jesus before you, praying without ceasing, being alert, and knowing that He who has prepared the way will come to take you to be with Him where we shall be forever. Amen.