

## Bible Study

### First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

**Opening Prayer:** (Sign of the Cross) “Lord God, when your people wandered in the darkness of sin, you sent the True Light to live among them and reveal to them the God whom they longed to know. The darkness of sin still lures us sometimes from the path of light. Reveal yourself to us again today in your Word, and light our path with truth so that we might prepare well for your coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

#### **Focusing Questions**

Last Sunday we celebrated the last Sunday of the liturgical year with our celebration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Today we begin a new liturgical year. Most of the Gospel readings during this new liturgical year will be taken from the Gospel according to Saint Luke, which means that we are now in Cycle C of the 3-year rotation of Sunday Scripture readings. The First Reading will always have a thematic connection to the Gospel reading; the Second Reading will usually have a thematic connection during the special seasons, but during Ordinary Time it will usually be part of a series of readings from one of the Epistles.

1. “Advent” means “coming.” Advent is always a liturgical season with a double vision: preparing to celebrate the anniversary of Jesus’ coming on the day of his birth and preparing to greet Jesus when he comes at the end of time. The Church calls Advent “a time of devout and joyful expectation.” Do you find that to be true? Explain.
2. Do you look forward to the end of the world, or does that thought frighten you? Talk about that.

#### **Commentary before the First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

We begin a new liturgical year with a First Reading that promised the Jewish people a future king who would be a good and just king. The prophecy is set roughly 500 years before the birth of Christ, when Jerusalem and the surrounding villages were under attack from the Babylonians, which whom King Zedekiah had made political alliances because faith did not seem practical to him. His people suffered because of his lack of trust in God.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. Read 2 Samuel 7:11-16. What was the promise that God had made long ago to the people of Israel and Judah (the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, respectively) during Jeremiah’s time?
2. The political kingship of Israel and Judah never did return to the bloodline of King David. So then, did the prophet and God lie, or did God fulfill this prophecy in another way?
3. Who or what is the “her” in verse 16?
4. Which words tell us that the Jewish people identified Jerusalem with the physical presence of God because of the temple being there with its Holy of Holies?
5. Does this passage help you to understand why many people who heard Jesus wanted to crown him as king?

#### **Commentary before the Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2**

Many in Thessalonica, a city in northeastern Greece, had eagerly embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Saint Paul later had to write this letter to them, because many of them had believed that the Second Coming was imminent. Now some of their number had died and they worried that those would miss out on the Last Day. Saint Paul assured them that their faith was well-founded, even if their conclusion about the Second Coming was wrong.

Read the Second Reading aloud. Notice that you will cross over into Chapter 4.

1. What was the source of the instructions given to the Thessalonians – Paul and his companions, or God?
2. Was the Church in Thessalonica lacking in love? How can you tell from this passage?
3. What are 2 of the results of living a life of love for all other people, as identified here?
4. Which 4 words in the middle of this reading were an assurance to the Thessalonians that their deceased loved ones would also see the Second Coming of Christ on the Last Day?

#### **Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

Today’s Gospel is remarkably similar to the one we read last Sunday, even though we are beginning a new liturgical year. Saint Luke’s Gospel was written shortly after the Roman armies destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. Just as the end of the world had not come with the destruction of the temple, so also we

may not see the end of the world when we think it must surely be close. Luke placed Jesus' words in this context in order to make the point that the only way to be ready for Judgment Day is to live each day in full readiness.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Share a verse or phrase that stood out for you in the reading. Comment if you wish.
2. What sort of signs in nature, which would have looked similar to what Jesus was predicting in this reading, might the people in Israel have been observing at the time this was written?
3. According to verse 28, how should we greet the actual coming of Jesus in glory?
4. And how does Jesus say we should be conducting ourselves as we await the Second Coming?
5. How does that compare to Saint Paul's words in the previous reading about how those who await the final coming of Jesus should conduct themselves?

### **Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives**

1. If Jesus is the fulfillment of the "Lord our justice" promise made by Jeremiah, how should his followers be relating with those around them?
2. The Gospel reading implies that preoccupations slow us down spiritually. Have you found this to be true? If so, which ones do you personally experience?
3. Reread the first sentence of the Gospel; what might God also be telling us about what lies in our future?
4. Which words from the Second Reading made the same point in a more positive way?
5. React to this statement by Aelred Rosser: "Authentic Christianity is realistic."
6. A recurring theme throughout the Book of Jeremiah is that people's lives, for better or worse, depend largely on their faithfulness to God. Do you feel that still is true today?
7. As you prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation soon, think about spiritual "sluggishness" that you might do well to confess.

### **Closing Prayer (adapted from the Blessing of the Advent Wreath)**

Lord God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples; he is the light that draws us to you and shows us the way; he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us; he is the Savior of every nation. May he come quickly and not delay. Let your blessing come upon us as we attempt to be more faithful to your call during this Advent season. May the traditional signs of this season be for us a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. We ask this through that same Christ our Lord. Amen.