

## **Advent I**

Cycle A, 12.1.19

Isaiah 2: 1-5; Romans 13: 11-14;

Matthew 24: 37-44

### **HEADING THE CALL... PREPARING THE WAY**

Today we enter into another new church year; we enter into another season of Advent as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus and the fullness of his Kingdom, prepare for Christmas, and prepare for our final judgment before our Maker. The readings admonish us to be prepared, to be vigilant and to not get left behind. We must avoid both any undue anxiety and also avoid being nonchalant about Jesus' second coming, about our final judgment, about living our faith.

Being prepared means contributing to the coming of God's kingdom among us, means climbing the Lord's mountain and being instructed in the ways of God. Climbing implies work. Being instructed implies we all still have something to learn. Being prepared means we act. Maybe our part is seemingly small but not insignificant. Jesus was only one man, but his life irrevocably changed human history.

The first reading talks about beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Isaiah does not talk about discarding or eliminating or destroying the implements of war but of converting them into agricultural instruments, converting them from tools for killing into tools for feeding.



The scriptures today do more than challenge us to be ready for the Day of Judgment. The scriptures today call us to be actively working towards the day when the kingdom of Jesus will come in all its fullness. We are not supposed to just be ready; we are supposed to be found working!

Some people find proof in today's gospel passage for the idea of a Rapture. Catholics do not believe in this concept. We believe the passage is meant to put an end to idle speculation regarding the date of the Last Day. Just as the wheat and weeds grow side-by-side until the day of harvest, so too do those who are prepared and those who are unprepared co-exist in the world. Just as only those wise bridesmaids who had extra oil on hand were admitted to the wedding reception and the foolish ones got locked out, so too those who are prepared and are found working will be ready to greet the Lord when he comes and will be admitted into the banquet. The sun rises and the rains fall both on the just and unjust.



Saint Paul invites us as followers of Jesus to prepare ourselves by putting on the armor of light and conducting ourselves properly as in the daylight; in other words, by living Jesus. We are called to sober up and live our faith. We don't have to be sullen or somber; just awake and alert. Francis de Sales tells us it is not enough for us to stop doing misdeeds; we must also get

rid of our desire to do them by promptly, diligently and frequently doing what is good. The practice of our faith is something we must do each and every day of our lives so we are always ready and prepared. We need to live and walk in the light as children of the light spreading and sharing the light.

There is a story about Colonel Davenport, Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives, back in 1789. One day, while the House was in session, the sky of Hartford suddenly grew dark and gloomy. Some of the representatives looked out the windows and thought this was a sign that the end of the world had come. An uproar ensued with the representatives calling for immediate adjournment. But Davenport rose and said, *"Gentlemen, the Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought."* Candles were brought and the session continued. The scriptures today challenge us to be found doing our duty, actively working for the coming of Jesus' kingdom.



The Church has given us this season of Advent to remind us of our need to be prepared, to live Jesus. We are invited to examine how well-stocked our faith cupboard is. Is there anything lurking there which needs to be freshened up? Is there anything past its expiration date or shelf

life? Is there anything missing that needs to be added there? We are invited to re-examine how we are working for the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus inaugurated it and we are meant to continue and further its coming. Do our choices and actions bring the Kingdom of God any closer? How do we act to advance the global and local conditions in which swords might be beaten into plowshares and spears turned into pruning hooks, act to advance the conditions in which literacy overtakes poverty and brotherhood and sisterhood bridge racial or ethnic divides? With God's grace we can transform ourselves into instruments of justice which promote living and shun violence, death and war. We are all called to prepare ourselves and to do our part.



In the days of Noah most people were skeptical and denied the warnings, did nothing, and drowned. We can be prepared and choose to act, or not. God leaves the choice up to us, but we have been advised. With God's grace may we be channels of God's love, peace and justice in our families and world. May God be blessed.

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