

First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

Year B RCL

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; Mark 13:24-37

**“Keep awake—for you do not know when the master
of the house will come.”**

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Today we enter the season of Advent and consequently, we begin the new liturgical year 2021. Advent this year has a special meaning for all as we continue hoping for a global solution of the pandemic crisis and we continue to mourn and miss the many loved ones whose lives were taken or changed forever during 2020.

Something we all could agree is that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the human fragility of life showing that we are clay that easily breaks and can easily be made into pieces. Eight months ago, when the authorities mentioned the possibility of losing 200,000 American lives, we all reacted with horror and disapproval, hoping things would not be that way.

Not only did we surpass that outrageous amount, but the virus has also taken away so far 65,000 thousand more lives and we are again plunged into the record numbers of hospitalizations and people affected nationwide and globally.

Contrary to the stability and steadiness of life that we like to have, the reality is that we are living in uncertain times. It is here that the lessons of Advent make more sense than before. Since Advent is time to renew our hope and endure in our waiting, the time of Advent is a reminder of the transitorily and momentariness that conduces to the true reality of the Incarnation of Jesus.

The prophet Isaiah reveals a safe harbor for the “uncertain times” in which we live:

“O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

This phrase of verse 8 represents one of the most beautiful and perfect expressions of the relationship we humans have with God. Yes, we are fragile clay made of mud and dust, however, we are part of the perfect creation that God has made, and our whole life and destiny are in God’s hands.

God being the Potter of our clay knows very well how much people suffer and need His consolation and support especially in the difficult moments in which

we live. Only God can bring peace and restoration for the many families in the U.S.A. and across the globe that have suffered the effect of the pandemic in first person; and only God our Father has the capacity to bring the healing and wholeness we are all longing for.

Advent today is an encouragement to keep waiting, recognizing that each one of us and the whole humanity is the work of God's hands and He does not make mistakes. It is not the life we want or have control over, rather it is the very life we receive from God and live according to his creative plan.

Wake up! is our advent call "*Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come*" V.35

Advent is being alert, awake, continually patiently waiting, but ever ready and prepared.

Advent is the opportunity to be ready, to set our expectations on God, to prepare ourselves for Jesus' return. Let us not be confused or sad, because we cannot do as usual or as we have done in the past. It is not about gifts, decorations, or Christmas parties, it is however about Jesus Incarnation and His Second Coming. The crucified Jesus returns as the risen Lord "*Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.*" (V 26) to judge the living and the dead and His Kingdom will have no end.

Advent even in this pandemic, exercises our hope, we know He was born, we celebrate His life among us, we hear His promise that He will return, we need to wake up of all that distract us and wait on Him.

Waiting is something we do not like to do; we live in a world where waiting has no value. We feel that when we must wait for something or someone, we are losing our time, losing money, or losing something; and in a society where we all want to be winners, being on the losing side seems uncomfortable and painful. This is because we are far from God's logic, when we read the gospel, we discover that God delights and sustains those which the world calls losers, the "least of these." For God there are no losers or winners, we all are the work of His hands and an important component of His creation.

The difference between just waiting and Advent waiting, is that we know who we are waiting for, the Messiah who chose to be born in humility and the God who loves us to the end. It is not just waiting for Christmas, it is preparing ourselves to be in front of our Judge. Then even in uncertain times, the Advent invitation to "keep awake" finds its support not in the fears and tribulations of the present, but in the hope for the future. Knowing that we are in the Father's hands, do not grow weary or be tired of waiting, trust the work of God with the words we heard in today's psalm on verses 3,7,18:

“Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.” Amen.