

First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

Hope *Candle of Prophecy*

Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 64:1-9

¹ Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would tremble before you!
² As when fire sets twigs ablaze
and causes water to boil,
come down to make your name known to your enemies
and cause the nations to quake before you!
³ For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
who remember your ways.
But when we continued to sin against them,
you were angry.
How then can we be saved?
⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
⁷ No one calls on your name
or strives to lay hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have given us over to our sins.
⁸ Yet you, Lord, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lilies of the Covenant." Of Asaph. A psalm.

¹ Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.
You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,
shine forth ² before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might;
come and save us.
³ Restore us, O God;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.
⁴ How long, Lord God Almighty,
will your anger smolder
against the prayers of your people?
⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.
⁶ You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,
and our enemies mock us.
⁷ Restore us, God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

¹⁷ Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.
¹⁸ Then we will not turn away from you;
revive us, and we will call on your name.
¹⁹ Restore us, Lord God Almighty;
make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus

Christ.⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:24-37

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸ “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Reflection:

The people of Israel waited centuries for God’s promises to come true. They faced many times of challenges, including destruction of their homes, exile to foreign countries, returning to a devastated land laid waste by warfare, and domination by foreign nations. During the centuries before Jesus was born, it would have been easy to get discouraged, wondering where God was through all of this. These centuries are often called the silent time when there were no prophets. In actuality, this was not a silent time because it was during these centuries that the Old Testament went through its final stages of editing. God had given His people Scripture. This Scripture contained promises that someday, God would bring a Messiah who would lead the people to salvation.

During all of these centuries, the people cried out with the words like Psalm 80. They repented using the words of Isaiah 64. They recognized that they needed to be ready for the coming One. This started with repentance.

Today, like Israel, we wait for the second coming of the Messiah Yeshua. Mark 13 expresses the challenges we face in our own day as we await His coming. We have a sense that the end is pending and just around the corner. So much in this world is beyond our control. We are faced everyday with more bad news. This can add stress to us and even overwhelm us if we are not careful.

As we wait, we keep watch in eager anticipation. God has not left us to struggle in our own understanding or abilities. God has given us promises, just like ancient Israel. One of the greatest promises we have is expressed in 1 Corinthians 1: God will keep us firm in the end through Jesus Christ. Our greatest goal in this life is to have fellowship with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As we prepare for this Christmas season, let us be eager to experience this fellowship in new and fresh ways. Let our focus return to Christ and not drift to the problems of our age.

Prayer:

1. Praise God for the hope of Christmas and the grace God gives us in Christ.
2. Praise God that you lack nothing you need to do all God has for you.
3. Confess any doubt and fears you have today.
4. Ask God to renew your hope.
5. Listen to the Holy Spirit and ask if there is someone you can encourage today and be a source of hope.
6. Make a commitment to follow Jesus’ commands and live a life of love just like He did.