

December 3, 2017 – 1st Sunday of Advent -- Year B

Breaking News: Jesus is Coming!

Breaking News! "Happy New Year"!

Yes, this is the first day of our *new liturgical year*.

Breaking News: The Gospel I just proclaimed was from the Gospel of Mark.

Last week and the 51 weeks preceding it, we had selections from the Gospel of Matthew.

We called that "Liturgical year A" and now we are starting "Liturgical year B".

Breaking News! As we start this new liturgical year we have changed our principle liturgical colors from green to various shades of purple. We also include pink since that will mark the half-way point of this liturgical season, the four Sundays of Advent, the season preparing us for Christmas.

Advent is a time of joyous anticipation of Christmas, the day commemorating Jesus' birth over 2000 years ago.

Breaking News: Jesus is coming!

Last week we were in a very joyful mood since we were celebrating Jesus in his triumphant position as Christ the King, his position for now, for the future and for all eternity.

In quite a contrast, today we start this season of Advent with a very introspective spirit, a very reflective tone.

For example, in our liturgical world the purple color is associated with us looking inward at ourselves, questioning ourselves about the possibilities of our thoughts and actions requiring any changes, and repenting of wrongs that we have done.

And it is not simply a matter of liturgical colors.

It is also the Scriptures we are reading that lead us in that direction.

Let us consider today's readings and what message they have for us today and for this Advent season.

Our First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah is from near the end of that book.

At that point the Israelites have returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon.

They are really bummed out to find their city, their homes and their temple destroyed.

The Scripture reading is a prayer, a prayer known as a *lament*. It starts out and ends with intimate words with the Lord: "You, Lord, are our father."

The prayer recognizes God for having done some awesome deeds but then recognizes that they have been a sinful people.

They pray: "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down."

Those words end up being prophetic and are used in Mark's gospel when Jesus is baptized in the River Jordan by St. John the Baptist.

Like those people from 500 years before Christ, we too can lament about our situation, our own sinfulness.

We can also join those people of old with the hope that the "Lord would rend the heavens and come down."

When do we wish for his coming?

Today, in this Eucharist;

at Christmas when we recall Jesus' birth;

in the end times when Jesus will come as Christ the King.

Today's psalm is also a lament.

We repeat the psalm response several times:

"Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved."

Words with such a significant message for us.

Those words make our relationship with the Lord a cooperative effort.

They ask for the Lord's help.

They recognize our dependence on the Lord.

They recognize that, even with our good intentions, we don't do all that should be done.

Recall that response as we enter this Advent season.

Our second Scripture reading is from the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, a community in southern Greece.

Paul thanks God for the variety of charismatic gifts that have been manifested in their Corinthian Christian community.

They had been gifted by the Lord with the ability to speak in tongues and with great insights into the Lord relating to their lives.

He then reminds the Corinthians that it is still NOT over ... the Lord will come to them in still ever greater ways.

It is still NOT over for us here today!

We continue to receive blessings from the Lord, blessings that enable us to grow in our relationship with the Lord in an upward spiraling fashion ... growing in our knowledge of the Lord ... growing in our love of the Lord ... growing in service to the Lord.

Today's gospel brought a smile to my face.

I can just imagine a teacher in a classroom, speaking rather loudly:

"Johnny, yes you over there in the 4th row.

Wake up! Pay attention to what I am saying!"

Stay awake and I mean it!

Let's not get stuck in our laments!

Jesus has a message for us.

"Johnny, I love you ever so immensely.

Please listen to me as I tell you how much I love you.

Wake up! Whether you are behaving well or not ... I love you.

Wake up! Whether it is day or night, rain or shine, sleet or snow ... I love you.

Wake up! Whether you have just been born or you are lying on your deathbed ... I love you.

Will you love me in return?"

There's our question for Advent!

Wake up! Will you love me in return?

Wake up!

Good news is breaking!

Jesus is coming!