

The Sunday Missive – November 29, 2020



cousin charlotte

The First Sunday of Advent

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Jan Swanson, Diane and Roger Ludin, Nancy Castle, and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, November 29. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to your rector, The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or: sssymington@gmail.com. **And so we begin:**

Bless the Lord, who forgives all our sins; whose mercy endures forever.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through the one who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Gracious God, we praise you for your child Jesus, who is the Christ, Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, the wisdom that teaches and guides us, the Savior of every nation. Let your blessing come upon us as we light this wreath. May it be for us a sign of thy promise of salvation.

O God of love, you are the true sun of the world, evermore rising and never going down. We pray you to shine in our hearts, that the darkness of sin and the mist of error being driven away, we may this day, and all our life long, walk without stumbling in the way you have prepared for us, which is Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in glory everlasting. Amen

Hymn 594 – God of Grace and God of Glory

God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power;
Crown thine ancient Church's story; bring her bud to glorious
flower.

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour,
For the facing of this hour.

Cure thy children's warring madness, bend our pride to thy
control;
End our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom's
goal,
Lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of thy salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving thee whom we adore,
Serving thee whom we adore.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggMgZbDA52w>

A Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah -- Chapter 64

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalm 80

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!*
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,

Shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh* Stir up
your might, and come to save us!

Restore us, O God* Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

You have fed us with the bread of sorrow* And given us tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors* Our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts* Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven* Have regard for this vine, the stock your right hand has planted.

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts* Let your face shine, that we may be saved.

A Reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians – Ch. 1

From Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, to the church of God that is in Corinth, together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of the Lord. God will strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on that day. For God is faithful, and it is by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hymn 657 – Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee:

Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and
praise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTehUQA0KTA&t=52s>

A Reading from the Gospel According to Mark – Chapter 13

Jesus said, “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Mark’s gospel was written down in the first century, around the year 70, when Roman rulers, fed up with Jewish opposition, had systematically destroyed Jerusalem and its Jewish institutions yet again, leaving the city in utter ruin, its few survivors scattered. In the portion of Mark’s gospel we just heard, Jesus is reported to

have predicted the destruction of the temple that would indeed come to pass even before the generation that knew him in person had died out.

As in the time of the Babylonians, as in the time of Antiochus the Seleucid, so too in the face of the Roman apocalypse, there was a Godly attitude to take, a way to behave, a faith to preserve no matter what is going on in the world. The predictions of destruction and portents of divine appearance that run through apocalyptic literature function not as prophecies about future events so much as descriptive instructions about how to be in the present. As Christopher Hutson has noted, “It turns out the enemy is not any one empire; all political and economic powers are liable to be coopted by Satan. They seek their own worldly agendas at the expense of ordinary people. These powers lull us to sleep (or convince us of the urgency of their purposes) by reassuring us that they have our best interests at heart. They play on our fears, our prejudices and self-interests so we do not notice their demonic behaviors; beware!”

What are the signs for which we might look? What are the ways we might be said to be dozing off? The question for Advent is: are we looking forward to and preparing for the arrival of God, who has left us in charge of the shop here, or are we just trying to get ready for a strange and melancholy Christmas? When Jesus comes, we may not be caught napping, but will we be caught online shopping?

A wise person once said, “The deeper your prayers echo in your own consciousness, the more audible they are to God.” So looking at and listening to our own inner voices can give us clues about our spiritual wakefulness.

Are we praying, with the prophet Isaiah for God to “come among us, to tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil?” Do we look for

ways to acknowledge: “O Lord, we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. We are all your people?” Are we eager, as Donna Henes has urged, to “remember that we are part of the vastly diverse and potentially functional family of humanity -- cousins to all the inhabitants of the Universe?”

Psalm #80, which we sang together today, is full of verbs, action words for God’s behavior, that is: prayers. As we move through Advent together, we can hold in our hearts the balance between times of chaos and confusion and times of peace and assurance; times of yore when other powers seemed to prevail, and times up yonder when all will be just and perfect. Each moment affords each one of us the opportunity to say:

“Come, Give ear , Shine forth, Stir up, Restore, Turn again, Let your face shine, Look down, See, Have regard, Give life,” and mean it...or not.

The so-called “end times” have always been and will always be, as long as we can think on the reality of God’s presence in Christ. From the fig tree learn its lesson: its branch is tender; its leaves are sprouting; summer is near; you know that God is near, at the very gates. This generation will not pass away until all has taken place.

Our prayers will tell us whether we really want the heavens to open up, whether we really want the hour and day to come wherein all things are made new, all Creation is equally honored and God made flesh makes sense. What are we praying for?

Prayers

Most merciful God, we know that you do not willingly afflict or grieve the children of humanity. Look with pity upon the sorrows of the people of the earth, now afflicted and threatened by pestilence. We remember the sick, the vulnerable, the hungry, the lonely and all who work to care for them. Nourish their souls with

patience, strengthen their hands and hearts, comfort them with a sense of goodness, shine your face upon them and give them peace.

We pray for those who are far off and those who are near, especially those we name now – silently or aloud -- beloved of this community who are sick, injured, undergoing medical treatment or in recovery. Pray for all who are in any need or trouble this day.
Amen

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time, with one accord to make our common supplication unto you; and you have promised, through your well-beloved Child that when in the name of love, two or three are gathered together --virtually or otherwise -- you will be in the midst of us, fulfil now, O Lord the desires and petitions of your servants as may be best for us, granting us more knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

Hymn 66 – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDmfWoAuWEc>

May the One who loved the world enough to live among us in great humility, open your eyes to see the many ways Jesus comes to us again. And thus the blessing of Almighty God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer will be with you this day and remain with you forever. Let us go forth to follow and serve the Lord of love and peace. Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia!