

SERMON – Advent 1 2021

TEXT: Luke 21:25-26

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The time of Advent is upon us. The color blue adorns the Chancel, replacing last Sunday's white. For the church it is the beginning of a new year. Possibly this morning we find ourselves recovering from a Thanksgiving feast...still a bit lethargic. Or anticipating a family Thanksgiving gathering this very day – like I am.

So much to consider...Advent a time of anticipation, preparation, hope, maybe even trepidation. What will this new year in the life of the church, in the life of this congregation, in our personal lives and in our relationships, hold? This past year has had its challenges --- is this an understatement? Now, what lies ahead?

I have no crystal ball that peers into the future, nor do I know what lies ahead.

Many years ago the Sundays before Advent's arrival were known as the "End Times"...and appointed Scriptures supported this designation. Today's liturgical calendar moves from the Time of Pentecost, culminating with Christ the King Sunday, into Advent.

What can we make of this entrance of the church into a new liturgical year?

I believe we can take a cue from the Gospel readings for these Sundays. Some have wondered why those who developed the liturgical calendar selected the texts such as the one we heard this morning, and the ones to be heard in the weeks ahead. Some have questioned, why do we begin toward the end of Luke's Gospel with the Lord teaching about "end times"...wouldn't this reading have been more appropriate before the Time of Pentecost concluded?

In Worship during the next three Advent Sundays we will hear about John the Baptizer (two Sundays) and then conclude the Season with the Song of Mary, the Magnificat. It is almost as if we are moving in reverse...beginning at the end. Yet, while I may find this to be an interesting order, I have come to think of it being most appropriate.

From a powerful picture of God's Redemption, power and great glory, we eventually arrive at a moment when a virgin proclaims the wonder of what God is doing as God comes to dwell within God's own creation. Signs of power and great glory will be replaced with the birth of a child. How marvelous is God!

In this Advent Time we are challenged to hear words of redemption even in the midst of what may seem to be a time of chaos; we learn of John who calls people to repent of their sins – and paid with his life because he told the truth to the powerful ... even as he prepared the way; and we learn of a maiden whose life is upended by God.

I think it is safe to state that this year has been a year of challenges for communities of faith. For many communities of faith, understanding what God is calling them to be or to become, is a challenge for this new year.

One commentator on this text, Audrey West, wrote "The season of Advent is a sticky-note reminder to the church: God is doing a new thing. Again."

To this thought I will add a strong "Amen" ...and pray that you too may respond with "Amen...so be it".

Today our Advent Time journey begins as we hear of the "end times" and it will progress thru the weeks to come until we reach the time of beginning. This is the advent of a new year for the church and for communities of faith....and this includes you my dear friends.

Amen.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.