

The First Sunday of Advent November 28,2021

Advent Hope

“By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea
You and I, you and I, oh how happy we’ll be!”

And so it has been for the most part. About 10 years ago Cindy and I bought a two family home very close to the seashore in Lynn and it is a beautiful place to live. When we closed on the purchase, I remember saying; “You know, we really don’t need to go anywhere because now we’re already there!”

During the summer months I enjoy sitting out on my large verandah and watching the tides come and go, and the folks with their beach gear traipsing by for another idyllic day at the beach. At least until the storms gather and the King Tides rise and flooding takes out the low lying parts of nearby Swampscott. You can see how that place gets its name!

That plus those hot and humid days when the bacteria count rises and the health department must close the beach. Sea levels are rising and pollution fouls our oceans. That’s the facts. Then to further disquiet this idyllic life there are wars and conflicts which we learn about in the daily news.

Thus the words of Jesus come to life when he says; “Be alert; there will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.” Such foreboding words in today’s Gospel!

We care very much for God's creation and thankfully our newly elected local officials are bearing down on mitigating the effects of bacterial pollution and the newly repaired seawall in Swampscott will at least buy us some time. There is some hope on the local level. But there is much more work to be done.

We care about God's Creation and one another. Without regard to race, ethnicity, class, gender, orientation, language or where we come from. At least that's the Gospel plan. That's how Jesus loves us; without regard to any human categories we use to pigeon hole one another.

I've told you before that my own grandmother, God rest her soul, often said that it was the Irish who ruined Boston. That will tell you what she thought about my dad after that nasty divorce. She also made me swear on the family bible that I would never marry an Italian. I swore. I also married an Italian. My grandmother, Cindy & I have a good chuckle over that one now; Ma from her heavenly throne and we from our perch after 42 years of marriage.

There is much to do for us to become what our Presiding Bishop calls "The Beloved Community". As God loves us so we are called to love one another. Whether we are Native to these shores or from Ireland, Italy, The United Kingdom, Europe, The Dominican Republic, Columbia or any other place on the planet, or whatever language we speak, we are God's Beloved Community.

This is where the Advent Collect point us. This sacred season teaches us “to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility”. You know the works of darkness. Those that bring hatred, alienation, and violence between us.

But when we “put on the armor of light” we embrace the Way of Jesus. We love one another. We love those who are difficult to love. We even love our enemies. We become part of what our Presiding Bishop also calls “The Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement.”

Did you notice what the Prophet said in today’s first lesson? “I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land”. That Righteous Branch begins with King David’s father, Jesse. It continues down through the years to that little town of Bethlehem the night Jesus was born.

This Righteous Branch brings Justice and Righteousness into a dark world. Love breaks through the stone cold human heart to bring forgiveness and reconciliation. Even when he meets his end on a cross, Jesus forgives those who cause his death because...

Jesus is the Love of God made flesh and blood.

It is he who gives us grace to cast off the works of darkness now in the time of this mortal life and to put on the armor of light!

How I love the Psalms of David from which this Righteous Branch springs. Today we sing these stirring words of faith that Jesus, as an observant Jew recited so many times during the days of his earthly life;

“I lift up my soul to God, I put my trust in you;

Gracious and upright is the Lord; *

therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

He guides the humble in doing right *

and teaches his way to the lowly.

All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness”

At the beginning of this service you lit the first candle of the Advent wreath; the candle of Hope. It is Advent Hope we bring into the darkness as we light this eternal Advent Wreath a never ending Hope. It is a Hope of love and faithfulness that never ends.

Think for a moment with me of how we Hope at Trinity Church. We search for ways to serve God in this neighborhood. Through the work and generosity of many generations, God has given us this sacred space from which to deploy our many ministries to our membership and to those beyond.

Into this portion of the Beloved Community we welcome daily the Marigold School, The Academy of Creative Arts at Trinity or as we call it “ACAT”, and Dinah’s House. It is sad to see the end of Joyful Ladle’s work. But we press on doing what we can. And now your vestry seeks to continue this work and in a more sustainable way long into the future. This is our Hope.

God seeks ways through which we can reach profoundly into the lives of people. From the beginning of the Jesus movement the church in its better days organized its life around the needs of the people. When the church does this, God prospers the work of the church. Because the church is intended by Jesus to be his body in and for the sake of the world. As Teresa of Avila is so often quoted as saying;

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes with which Christ looks out his compassion to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.”

And now Cindy and I live out our days by the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea. And all of us praise God and serve one another as long as Hope endures.

In the Name of God, the Most Holy, Undivided and Everlasting Trinity. Amen

Fr Paul

Below, the readings on which today's sermon is based and my highlights of those lines that speak to my heart.

The Collect

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 him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Lesson: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Psalm 25:1-9

1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
my God, I put my trust in you; *

let me not be humiliated,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.

3 Show me your ways, O Lord, *
and teach me your paths.

4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.

5 Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, *
for they are from everlasting.

6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

7 Gracious and upright is the Lord; *
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

8 He guides the humble in doing right *
and teaches his way to the lowly.

9 All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Luke 21:25-36

Jesus said, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see

these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."