

Advent 2, 2015  
All In the Name of Jesus  
St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, OR  
By Rev. Mr. William Baker

*“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:25-28)*

The season of Advent is a time of looking to ‘last things’. The verses prior to the ones I just read were prophetic statements warning the Israelites of the future destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which came to pass in AD 70. We would do well to learn and mark for our understanding what the Bible teaches...it is not for the faint of heart, but for those of Faith. And that is what this sermon is about...those of faith; not Anglicans, not Lutherans, not Roman Catholics...just simply those of Faith. This prediction for the future of the faithful shakes the Heavens themselves! The hearts of mankind will fail them for fear! It will be an exercise in faith that no one has ever had to endure...but, for the faithful, there are examples that give hope in this coming tribulation.

The faithful in Noah's day (as few as there were) listened to God and marked the evidence of the times and following God's directions built an ark that would sustain them in a corrupt and failing world, a world that would, eventually be destroyed. For us we can see the ark as a representation of the church today...a place where all faithful Christians come together as the children of God. We enter through the door, which is Jesus Christ; the single window to the outside, the Holy Spirit giving us glimpses into the heavenly realm. And at the final moment, before the flood destroys the unjust, before the ultimate destructive blow is given...the door is sealed for the safety of all within the ark...sealed by the blood of Jesus...

In the face of failing hearts and nations in distress, there is a moment of comfort for the children of God found in today's scriptures; *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."* Isn't it just like our Lord to provide a way out just when we are in the greatest need? When the Great Flood came God sealed the faithful in an ark that would carry them to safety. God's people were again rescued and washed clean when they passed through their watery baptism in the Red Sea and were saved from the torments of bondage in the clutches of Pharaoh's hands. Today that ark is the church sealed by the blood of Jesus; today our crossing the Red Sea to safety is our entrance into the church through Holy Baptism. We must only have faith and believe. And faith being the 'substance of things HOPED for reminds us that our hope for ultimate peace, our hope for unlimited love, our hope for ultimate joy is the foundation of our faith. Having hope in the things beyond this present world is where our faith begins...where all Christian Faith begins. And Hope in the forgiveness and redemption of Jesus Christ is where all Christian journeys embark.

But not all journeys that lead to the Truth are the same. (Nervous yet?) All of us here at St. Andrew's are on a journey...together...following the same path. As Anglicans, we see value in the traditions of the early church, the creeds, Holy Scripture and the sacraments. For us this is the way to redemption and everlasting life. Does this mean that those of other denominations are lost or if not lost, have nothing of value to offer Christendom?

*"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity..."*

Perplexity...The Bible predicts some scary stuff coming in the future. But, there is some scary stuff going on right now! When trying to understand the mysteries of God, the power of Grace, prophecy or the workings of the Sacraments in the Christian life along with today's current events, we have to admit there is much perplexity. Some things are difficult if not impossible for us to grasp. Christian understanding and experience is full of perplexities, hence the diverse views within the Christian church and the varied denominations that fall within the bounds of Christianity. Anglicanism was set to be the bridge between the extremes; our Roman brethren and those of a deeper Protestant

persuasion. Anglicanism was not set in place to be a separate entity void of relations to our other brethren in this world. Anglican understanding would put us all in the same boat...or should I say the same bowl.

When we look at Christianity as the ultimate state of belief in which Salvation and Eternal Life solely belong, do we think of other denominations as integral members that make up Christianity, the same way that individual members of the produce family make up a pre-meal salad; or do we feel we should strive to covert other Christians to our understanding of Christ's leadings to form a type of Christian soup in which all are blended together under one identity? Maybe we can have our soup and salad at the same meal...

While there are differences in understandings between our Christian brethren and ourselves, what is very apparent is an equal love for the Saviour of mankind and the importance of prayer. Listen to these words from Isaiah chapter 56; *"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people... Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."* (exerts from Isaiah 56:3-7)

Furthermore: 1 Timothy 2:1 states, *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men...notice each of these is a form of prayer.*

Prayer in the name of Jesus Christ is the foundation that unites us all. But there is more to it than that isn't there? In 1 John we hear plain as day that the true understanding of God is found in the Holy Trinity. We don't hear these words often enough so let me read 1 John 5:7-8: *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."* Christianity in its bare bones prays to the One and only God found in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our Christian brethren in other denominations understand and believe this as we do with perhaps some mystical gray areas mixed in. Even in the sacraments we have disagreements in the workings of the 'Son' as a member of this most

Holy Trinity. Is it the Father 'and' the Son or is it the Father 'through' the Son? Separations over what seem to be such minor disagreements. Do our disagreements cause one side to become unchristian? Not in most cases and in any event we must remember who the final judge is.

Fr. Dan Squires from our sister church St. Michael's sent along some insight from Richard Hooker, an Anglican Divine, pertaining to another discussion Chris and I have been having concerning Holy Communion. I find the words of Hooker in reference to Holy Communion applicable to what I am getting at this morning. When we consider the mystical union of Christ to His church there is much we don't understand. For us to claim perfect and undefiled knowledge of Truth would be poor judgment. There are so many high and lofty truths concerning God, our place in the world and our ultimate move into eternal life that we must be careful not to disregard those of other persuasions who may have a different grasp on things than we do. Maybe there are times when they are more correct than we are. And here is what it comes down to, and this is a direct quote from Hooker: **"But that which all parties receive for truth, that which everyone has sifted, is by no one denied or doubted of, must needs be matter of infallible certainty."** Evident truth found in our common ground and an acknowledgment that the murky waters of sin have clouded our minds to other truths...and it is in these darker waters where our disagreements cause us to gather in different parts of the body of Christ. This is why we must respect the beliefs and customs of other Christians...as different as they may be from ours, as long as our areas of disagreement do not cross the doctrinal foundations of scripture.

Let us remember the words of St. Paul when he said, *"For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or gentiles..."* (1 Cor. 12:13) The body needs all its parts; the eyes, the hands, the feet. This is the season of Unity...of seeing God's presence in the world through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ who came not for Anglicans only, not for Lutherans only and not for Roman Catholics only, not for Nazarenes, Presbyterians and Methodists only. Jesus came for all who would come to Him.

Remember your brothers and sisters across the isle this morning, remember your brothers and sisters across town at that 'other' church,

remember your brothers and sisters across the seas and oceans that love the Lord in Trinity. We are a unity of diversity, a perfect addition to that salad that incorporates so many individual flavors and colors that makes us look so forward to a united communion, a partaking of that most precious meal of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We are a unity of diversity, a perfect mixture that when combined together in one substance under God, contain the perfect amount of ingredients that make our Christian soup a perfect compliment to that Holy meal. We are soup and salad. Together as the complete body of Christ we will overcome the perplexity of Christ's return.

We were united and bound to each other from the beginning of time to this present day and forever. We were never intended to do it on our own as individual parts of a body, but to work together as one body in submission to the head, Jesus Christ. Staying united to the body can only be accomplished within the church; it's teachings, it's traditions and it's diversities. Whatever part of the body one belongs, it is important to stay connected, discerning the presence of God and His calling upon our lives.

Julian of Norwich, when speaking of the Anglican Church, said:

**"Anglicanism is a mode of making sense of the experience of God."**

A "mode of making sense". Can we deny that this definition applies to other Christian schools of thought? In this Advent season let us remember the words spoken by the Angel of the Lord when he said, *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."* (Luke 2:10)

Take time this Advent to see all Christians as equal members in the body of Christ...Christ died for mankind not a denomination.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.