

Second Sunday in Advent

The First Lesson: Isaiah 55:1-13

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David. 4 Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. 12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

The Second Lesson: 2 Timothy 3: 1-17

1 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was. 10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of

life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; 15 and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Sermon

Introduction

I went through confirmation class at St. Andrew's Episcopal church in Pocatello, Idaho. During that time our church had a robust congregation and we had about 7 people who were getting confirmed. As part of the process, we had to choose a spiritual mentor to help us with our studies and advise us on spiritual matters. My father chose for me. I ended up with an Episcopal priest who worked with my father and, honestly, didn't seem too excited about the prospect. We met once, after church, in a hurried "you have any questions?" moment. Who I really wanted was Deacon Hutchinson. He was young and interesting, and I saw him meet with his mentor every Sunday and he would often bring donuts. I had a classic case of mentor envy!

When it came time for the bishop to come and we were all confirmed, I remember seeing Deacon Hutchinson present his student with a brand-new Bible. I thought this was a tradition, but I quickly found out it was not. I barely saw my sponsor and I remember feeling a little short changed that day. I wanted my very own Bible.

Years later, as I was getting ready to get married, I was telling Fr. Bob, the rector at the time, this story. He laughed as we recalled the event. A few days later I got a call from him asking if I could meet him for coffee, and he presented me with a brand-new Bible. It was the first one I had ever owned. Since then, I have acquired several versions of the Word of God that I have and refer to every day. I have a several study Bibles and this one. (Holds up Bible) Fr. Barnes blessed this for me when I decided that St. Andrew's was going to be my home church

Body

Our scripture readings for today paint a picture of why having a Bible to read and access to the Word of God is so important and necessary in today's world.

2 Timothy 3:1-7 The Apostle Paul tells Timothy the sinful nature of mankind as the End of Days comes.

In our second lesson today, the Apostle Paul tells us about the nature of mankind and what the human condition will look like in the last days. There will be people who love themselves more than anything else. They will be lovers of money, worshiping the power of currency. Paul says they will be boastful, proud and will covet what others have. They will be blasphemous, unruly, unholy, and unthankful. They will accuse others falsely, be fierce and be traitors to others. Throughout all of this, the main point of what Paul was saying, people will turn from God and become “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,*” They will find pleasures of the flesh and of the world that mean more to them than God does.

This attitude marks our current age in many ways. For example, think of national advertising slogans we are bombarded with daily. “Nothing is taboo, break the rules, live life with no boundaries, do what feels good, and Nike’s Just do it! We are encouraged to do what the flesh wants to do.

2 Timothy 3:8-13 Paul further discusses the strategy of the corrupt.

As we move through the scripture, Paul discusses further how the corrupt and those separated from God will try to influence us and test our faith. They will creep into our households and bring all sorts of lusts and sin with them. We will be approached by those with corrupt minds, who according to St. Paul, will never be able *to come to the knowledge of the truth*. It has always been this way with the enemy. He will infect our thoughts with uncertainty, with fear and with doubt. He will tempt us with pleasures of the flesh and the quick and easy path, all designed to move us farther away from God and His perfect will for our lives.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 Paul gives reassurance to Timothy that he has followed the direction, faith and purpose given him.

Paul tells Timothy that he has instructed him on doctrine, purpose, faith and how to endure the challenges of life. He uses his example of how he suffered at Antioch where he was run out of the city (Act 13:50), Iconium where he almost lost his life (Acts 14:5), and Lystra where they did stone him and left him for dead (Acts 14:19). Paul tells him about these events to reiterate that no matter what came in his way, how he suffered, the Lord was with him and delivered him. Faith in Jesus Christ gave him the strength to persevere, and St. Paul, who wants us to have such faith and perseverance, finishes this lesson by pointing to Holy Scripture, telling us that knowledge of the Scriptures provides us with the wisdom to receive the Salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

Action

Our Bible contains the inerrant Word of God. As Paul states it is inspired by God and communicated through human authors. Holy scripture feeds us in ways that food and drink cannot. There is no book like it in its continuity and consistency. It is unique in its honesty, influence, and in its power to transform lives. It is in every language and is the most popular

book of all time. As Paul reminds us it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. God wants us to be holy and He gives us the information, the structure, and the commandments to stay in faith, find comfort and know our redeemer lives.

Scripture is a whole fabric that tells a huge story. As I began to read the Bible, I was amazed at how it was filled with real people, making real mistakes, being really human, and that God loved them through it all. The Bible tells us how we were created, why there is sin in the world and how the enemy prowls about like a roaring lion waiting for an opportune time to tempt us. It also tells the tales of the great heroes of faith who despite hardships, impossible situations, and conflict remained hopeful, obedient, and faithful to God. The Bible also tells us how God sent His Son to the earth to redeem us of our sins and the gift of everlasting salvation. In the Gospels, Jesus commands us to *“love one another”* (John 13:34), He tells us *“With God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26), and our Lord assures us that we are never alone, saying *“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20). Through parables and miracles, we learn of the power of God, the wisdom of how to live life in accordance with His will, and how to glorify God with our actions and words.

The Bible is a book filled with pertinent, realistic information and the promises of God. We learn how the Bible gives us eternal life through the “living and abiding Word of God” (1 Peter 1:23), it gives us power against “the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16), spiritual power and strength, (Psalm 119), and how it will build up our faith. (Romans 10:17) As you read the Bible, you will see the Book of Common Prayer comes directly from its pages. It is full of history, the interesting stories of Noah, David, Solomon and how a man who hated and persecuted Christians became the Apostle Paul.

The Bible has poetry, captivating stories, and beautiful prose. It tells the history of Israel, God’s chosen people. It tells us what will happen in the future. It tells of a new Heaven and a new earth and a New Jerusalem. The Holy Scriptures give us hope, they educate and inspire us. They give us a sense of history and an understanding of God’s plan.

Conclusion

This advent, I urge you to prepare for the coming of our Lord by reading one of the Gospels before Christmas day. Learn who Jesus was, is and will always be. Learn what He taught and gave to the world and let the Word of God inspire you.

Make reading the Word of God a daily habit and pray for discernment and understanding of the great truths God is communicating. I urge you all, as today’s Collect advises us, to read, mark, and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures and receive the blessing that awaits you therein.

To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever, Amen.

