

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lena, IL – 27 November 2022
First Sunday of Advent - Year A

1st Reading: *Isaiah 2:1-5*

Psalm: 122

2nd Reading: *Romans 13:11-14*

Gospel: *Matthew 24:36-44*

Sermon - Vicar Thomas J. Mosbø

In the name of the Father, ✚ and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I have a little confession to make. I am *not* a morning person. This is probably one of the reasons I would not have made a good farmer. My father, who was passionate about farming, regularly woke up at about 4:00 in the morning. I would rather stay up until 4:00 than get up at 4. In fact, in my previous job with IBM, I frequently did stay up until 4 because I could only work on the servers I supported between 2 and 4. In spite of this, I have throughout my life needed to get up in order to start work at 8 or 9, and I have been able to cope all right with such a schedule.

In our reading this morning, the Apostle Paul encourages us to wake up early: "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." We should all be Morning People. That is, we should live in the light of Christ's coming, not in the darkness of our worries, our fears, our disappointments, our failures.

We all have dark areas in our lives, whether we have caused them ourselves or whether they are beyond our control. And we long to find an answer, to make things right, to be at peace, to feel that our lives have mattered. There are many different ways of describing what it is that we are seeking in life.

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal, who also was the inventor of the computer, expressed it this way: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ." We often try to fill this hole with other things - wealth, power, work, even family - but nothing else can fit and fill the hole in our heart except God himself, in Jesus his Son. So we are dissatisfied, frustrated, lost.

Another Christian philosopher, Saint Augustine, who lived some 16 centuries ago, expressed it in this prayer: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our souls are restless until they rest in you.” Again, all of the things we seek after and strive after, unless we seek them in God, make us more restless than ever. And so we find ourselves tossing and turning in the nighttime of our lives, restless, unfulfilled. Is there any hope?

And the answer we hear in all our readings today is: Yes, there is hope. Jesus is coming. And like Paul, Jesus himself tells us to wake up: “Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” As Peter tells us in his second letter: “The day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.”

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the beginning of our church year, and we begin with the good news that Jesus is coming. Yes, Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, but he comes every year at Christmas to be born again in our hearts. “Let every heart prepare him room.” “Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.”

Jesus is coming, to bring rest to our restless souls, to fill the God-shaped vacuum in our hearts. The prophet Isaiah, and today’s Psalmist both express this with the image of Jerusalem, the place where God dwells with his people. Jesus, emmanuel, God with us, comes to us, but not just into a temple built of stone, but into the temple of our hearts.

So again, let us awaken as Morning People, living in the hope and light of Christ’s coming. As God tells us through the Psalmist: “Peace be within you. I will seek to do you good.”

And as Isaiah says, “let us go to the LORD, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths”. As Paul says, “let us live honorably as in the day, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ”. And as Jesus says, “You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour”. And as we have already sung, “Wake, awake, for night is flying”.

Amen!

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