

**Homily for the 1st Sunday of Advent - Year C**  
**St. Peter's 10/12/5 Masses - November 28, 2021**

**Jeremiah 33:14-16** "A righteous branch of David shall execute righteousness in the land."

**Psalms 25:4-14** "Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Lead me in your truth."

**1 Thess 3:12 - 4:2** "May your hearts be holy so you may be blameless at his coming."

**Luke 21:25-28,34-36** "Be on guard that your hearts are not weighed down with worries of life."

**So, Are You Ready? ... For Christmas?**

**Introduction**

This morning when I turned on my computer, I got Google's best positive message. This is one of the largest and most successful corporations in the world. Every day they have the power to influence peoples' lives. What's their message? It's a couple of strings of coloured lights, with the message: The Seasonal Holidays. That's the best they had to offer today. No acknowledgment that the Christian New Year begins today.

**Advent**

We respond to Google with Advent. We light a candle on a wreath and ask God to pour his light into our hearts. This lighting of the first of four candles is an ancient custom. We are praying for the coming of the light, especially the one we call the light of the world.

We light the first of four candles today to be the first reminder that the light was promised by God. The promise of that light was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, foretold to David, announced by Gabriel, carried out through Mary, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That true light is now just waiting to come again into our darkness. Every Christmas light, every candle, even the light of the morning sun, all testify to the coming of that light which we must now invite into the centre of our hearts.

Advent has a twofold nature. It prepares us for Christmas, when we recall Christ's first coming among us, and it is also a time when we look forward to his second coming at the end of the ages. Advent is a season of joyful expectation. During Advent, each Sunday's Gospel reading has a specific focus. The Old Testament readings are prophecies about the Messiah and messianic times. The selections from the writings of the Apostles present exhortations and instructions on different themes of this season.

Through Advent, we will be encouraged to reflect quietly on our lives and to make room in our hearts again for the coming of Jesus, the saviour.

The Jews will also be celebrating light. Hanukkah begins at sundown today. That's the Jewish feast which celebrates the rededication of the temple after it had been desecrated.

### **Signs of the Times**

Wasn't it heartbreaking to hear a couple who could do nothing but watch as everything they had worked so hard for over so many years, just gone. Their barn. Their house. Their family photo albums. All gone. I'm guessing they probably had lots of people wanting to help them deal with that situation. People often do come together in such situations. And yet, most of the people around them were probably dealing with their own flood losses. It must seem to those communities that something like the end of the world is happening.

It's hard to imagine such loss. And yet, most people have felt, at some point in their lives, that their losses were so great, they could not imagine how they would get through it.

This is not new. The people of Israel in Jeremiah's time had lost everything, destroyed by Babylonian conquest, not just their personal lives but their city and the temple where they worshipped God. The people of Israel in the time of Jesus were also living lives of desperation as they listened to him talk about a cataclysmic end of times and wondered if that was upon them.

Two thousand years later, we have reason again to wonder if things are going off the rails. We are given the impression that the climate is disintegrating into chaos and that the world is imploding. We seem powerless against the tiniest of elements, a virus, which is pitting people against one another around the world. How are we to look at this? Is it a kind of end?

## **Jeremiah**

Jeremiah is one of many throughout the history of salvation who speaks a prophecy of things to come. He looks forward to a time when God will provide a righteous branch. Righteous means holy, which is God's essential character. Hundreds of prophecies point to Jesus. They could not have known it, but God would become human in Jesus Christ.

The gods of human history make promises but they never deliver. Those promises are empty. Gods invented by humans never prophecy great things that will happen in the future. But the God of the whole cosmos makes astounding promises to Israel and to all people, through the prophets. Who knew how God would fulfill those promises. The most influential man in history is Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the God-man, who changes everything, who reminds us to turn to the wisdom of God over human wisdom etc.

As the world grows weary in its injustice, we grow weary of what the world has to offer and are longing for Christ to redeem us. Jeremiah reveals God's promise that he will raise up a righteous shoot.

## **Psalm**

The psalmist prays: Lead me in your truth. God's truth IS truth itself. Only when we seek real truth will we come upon that golden nugget that is actually truth. And the truth is that there is a God in heaven who has sent his Son to experience what we experience. To be a light which accompanies us in our darkness.

## **Luke**

This part of the Gospel of Luke is what is called apocalyptic writing. It reveals something important at a deeper level, so it is not to be interpreted literally. It's a kind of reality that is meant to be seen with the inner eye. It points to the present reality of Christ, a future in time, but also an end of time when the final coming of Christ.

This passage and these words of Jesus really tell us of the universal experience of the world and of all human beings. Many people get twisted in knots trying to figure out if these kinds of passages mean something particular about our time and when this will happen. That's why the people keep asking Jesus when this will happen.

But Jesus, as he often does, wants people to focus on higher things. That means to stop worrying about what is going on around you and make your heart ready to receive God. Yes, there will be signs in the sky. There will be roaring of waves. These will disturb you, but don't let them. When we trust God, those things will not disturb our spirits. The environment looks disturbed and society looks disturbed.

It looks to us like these things that are happening have never happened before, but that's just not true. There have always been both natural and human disasters which turned peoples' lives upside down. We worry about them. Our children are now in such a state of anxiety as has only existed in the worst of the most terrible wars. I can see it in their eyes when I go into a school. However, those who trust in God can be concerned about those things without being overcome with anxiety and foreboding, that terrible feeling that something terrible is happening or is going to happen.

## **Call To Action**

Superpowers and superheroes are as big today as they have ever been. To me, that's a clear sign that we are longing for something beyond our natural capacities to make life meaningful. I suggest to you that we already

have a superpower, given to us by God. It's called 'showing up'. We have the power to show up for God and our faith and our family.

The world around us has all kinds of messages that are sometimes not too bad. But they are just shadows of God's plan for us, God's hope for us, God's dream and vision for us. Our task at this new beginning is to receive what God has already done for us. The difference is important. We don't take from God. That's the way the world works. Motivational speakers dramatically say that you have to go and get what you want, what you deserve. But our job in faith, is to receive, not to take. Over and over Jesus says to us, receive my love. Receive my body and blood. Receive my life and let it live in you. Then let it shine for others to see.

Advent is a joyous season. But it is also a time to reflect on whether we are a little too at home in this world. We can overcome that tendency to love the things of the world too much. A man named Charles de Foucault, who may one day be canonized a saint, put it like this: I would like to be sufficiently good that people would look at me and say: If this is a disciple, what must the master be like.

Fr Mike Schmitz answers the question about whether it is ok for Christians to put up lights and decorations. Here is his answer: There is no rule against it. Neither is there a command to put up lights. You are free to do what you know will help you best prepare for Christmas. Sometimes what happens is people do so much of those things that they are no longer ready to celebrate Christmas. Being ready is our first job so, if doing too much of those things prevents that, then change it.

Jesus WILL come into our life, possibly during our earthly life and possibly not till it ends. What if we lived this Advent differently than we have been living so that, on December 25, we were ready to let some things die in us so we could receive the fullness of joy, the fullness of Christ.

What if you and I began something brand new today. What if we ask ourselves with new meaning ... So are you ready for Christmas?

## **Key Verses Today**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *To you, I lift up my soul, O my God. In you, I have trusted. Let me not be put to shame.*

**Collect:** *Almighty God, grant that your faithful may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.*

**Jeremiah:** *The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel. 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. The Lord is our righteousness.*

**Psalm:** *To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.*

**1 Thessalonians:** *Brothers and sisters, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another. 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. We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, you should do so more and more.*

**Luke:** *Jesus spoke to his disciples: "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. 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. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with 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.*