

2 Readings: no. 3, p. 32 1st Reading: Jeremiah 33.14-16 2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3.12 – 4.2  
Gospel: Luke 21.25-28, 34-36

**1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2018**

Human consciousness has an amazing ability to envision the future. It is a marvelous gift that allows people to imagine events, not yet reached in time. We call this capability, **hope**, knowing well that hope must dance with an uncertain partner. Still, can you imagine a world without hope? The absence of hope is tragic, because it resigns a person to something less than God imagines. It chains us to past disappointments and is oblivious to God's plan. Deep hopelessness is very serious and may quickly descend a person into spiritual paralysis.

Expectant parents begin **hoping** for their unborn or adopted child, long before they are brought into the home. There are so many things to prepare and plan. Happiness, we might even say, sprouts from a place where seeds of hope are planted. Advent friends is a season of hope and people of God are characterized by the attention we give to creating a hopeful world. The **sureness** of an unfolding better future, from our experience of the present.

Theocritus in (c.270 BC) said, that, “Where there's life, there's hope.” And I would just add, that where there is hope in God, there is life eternal.

Well the prophet Jerimiah arrives in Israel's history at a time when the nation is in crisis. After defeat of the pious king Josiah the people have returned to their old idols. Jerusalem is soon thereafter destroyed and its citizens carried into exile. Jerimiah is killed in exile by his fellow countrymen and like most prophets is really only influential in death. None-the-less, it all appears quite bleak and yet it is in these places, God desires the baptized will sprinkle seeds of hope.

“The days are coming says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days in that time I will raise up for David a just shoot.” King David represents the pinnacle of Israel's greatest. The young warrior, beloved king, although certainly flawed human, is an important character in Israel's storied past. The hope of Israel is that they will one day ascend to the heights of that great era. Their memory is strong and from it they draw hope for a better tomorrow.

“Never shall David lack a successor, nor shall the priests of Levi ever be lacking.” This is the promise God made to the children of Israel. The words spoken through the prophet seem to defy the evidence. Their nation is in bad shape, if in fact, they even have a nation. But God brings hope to them in their time of deep tribulation. We know from our vantage point on this side of time, that through the Son of David and our high priest Jesus, God keeps his promises. Hope may become obscured by culture and circumstances, but God’s love and promise to his people never wanes.

The Gospel account Mother Church presents today is known as the “Coming of the Son of Man” discourse. They are all Jesus’ words and not the writer’s commentary. Our Lord employs nature and the cosmos to say something about the way the Son of Man will come. Dismayed, perplexed, fear, shaken are a few of the words Jesus chooses to describe his second coming. Clouds and glory are often associated throughout scripture, to describe an anticipatory environment. It’s why we use incense in our liturgy.

The coming of Jesus described in this Gospel is not of an innocent little baby being born outside with shepherds and angels. That historical and cultural celebration is pleasant and easy to find joyful. People of Advent hope though are challenged to stand tall, heads raised knowing our redemption is at hand even in the face of adversity. Let us then not sleep through this holy season of preparation, but instead prepare our hearts to be filled to overflowing with faith, hope and love.

We live in a time when the power of culture and popularism have seemingly taken over. How difficult it is for us to resist? In many “hurry up” cultures, Advent has simply been imbedded into the Christmas season. So much so, the two seasons are sometimes barely distinguishable. Friends, Christmas becomes a far greater celebration when we use this time as Mother Church intends.

Can we envision improved relationships with one another? Can we see reconciliation where there has been estrangement? Can we imagine giving only an equivalent amount of time to prayer, as we do to shopping this Advent season?

Would it matter if we looked a little more closely at the things we purchase. Have they been manufactured by people given a fair wage and treated with dignity? Will I bring hope to relieve the pain of loneliness suffered by so many at this time of year? Sisters and Brothers, Advent hope is a gift to all and is as near to us, as we are to Jesus.

Amen