

Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Advent - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Dec 1, 2020

Isaiah 11:1-10 "They will not hurt on my holy mountain. The earth will be full of knowledge of the Lord."

Psalms 72:1-17 "Precious is the blood of the weak and the needy in his sight."

Luke 10:21-24 "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth."

Starting Over

Introduction

When we were children, we believed in the 'do-over'. That was like a second chance to fix what we didn't do well in a game or a test. Movies and stories sometimes try to bring this desire into adulthood with the more mature sounding 'second chance'. We probably all want 'do-overs' for things we've done badly or not done that we should have. Failing that idea, we have the 'make-over'. TV shows are based on taking a house or our bodies and having experts refashion our looks so we can finally look how we imagine ourselves to be.

But Advent is not really about do-overs or make-overs. It is about turning around and seeing who we already are as children of God. This season of repentance is about turning again to God, who reveals himself to us, and who reveals us to ourselves. This process does not depend on what is going on in the world. That will be more important than ever this year - this Advent.

Three Dangers

Today, Jesus refers to the wise and the understanding. It sounds like a compliment. It's not. At one level, he was referring to the scribes and Pharisees. Those were the professionals, the ones who had dedicated themselves to understanding and teaching strict observance of the regulations. However, we must always remember that Jesus is looking straight at you and I when he says these things. It might be about us as individuals or it might be about how our whole society approaches life, but it certainly does apply to us.

There are at least three dangers to which the wise and understanding are particularly subject:

1. The first is pride in ourselves and in our powers. There are so many examples of this, but you and I know we don't need to look very far to see how much it hurts our pride that something we can't even see is wreaking absolute havoc on our whole way of life, but mostly on our puffed up image of ourselves.

2. The second danger of the learned is an extension of the first. It is to have a kind of overconfidence in the ability of the mind to master all truth and to control all things. This was the vision of the first of the modern scientists. In the early 17th century, Francis Bacon imagined a scientific revolution which would bring all of the forces and aspects of nature under our observation and control. We would be masters of the created order, increasing our dependence on ourselves and less on faith in God. And, as someone sarcastically posed the question: How's that working out for you?

3. The third danger is to get so focused on analyzing and classifying things that we lose the simple message of the big picture. That picture is painted by the initiator and creator of all things, God the Father, who is known to us in Jesus Christ.

The Revelation

Advent isn't a time for do-overs or make-overs. It's a time for turning to Jesus Christ, the greatest of all surgeons, and ask him to cut the pride away from our souls.

Advent is a time for letting go of our phony sense of control over nature and becoming like the humble infants to whom Jesus says belong the heavenly delights. Do not rejoice in your accomplishments but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Isaiah's vision of a heavenly fulfilment of peace and joy is now revealed to children, not to the wise. It takes a child to believe in the images of lions and lambs lying down together. These are the children, the disciples, for whom Christ gives thanks in his prayer to the Father.

No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. This does not mean that there is no knowledge of God except in Christ. The heavens declare his glory, and his law is written in our hearts. He is the Father Almighty, the ground and the breath of all being. But when we speak of God, we mean in particular God as he has made himself known to us only through the same Christ we are invited to discover all over again right now, right in the middle of this time.

The really important truth is revealed truth. It is not discovered by us, but disclosed to us. It is greater and higher than what our minds are capable of. All we can do is pray for it, wait for it, place ourselves in the way of receiving it, seek to serve it.

The Joy of Knowing Christ

The Good News directly from the lips of Jesus today is that the God of Christian faith is known in no other way than through this event. For the disciples of Christ, religion and faith in God was not a problem to be solved. It was a treasure, a pearl of great price. That's the treasure, the pearl, that we are invited and called to rediscover again this Christmas. Has there ever been an Advent, at least in our lives, which needed a new discovery of a truth which can make us joyful?

The Reason For the Season

We need Jesus. The stump of Jesse, King David's line, looked dead. That same stump which Isaiah described and which Jesus fulfilled, has become the joy and the happiness of our hearts should we open those hearts to it.

Treasure the Word of God this Advent. The lion of Judah has conquered the grave. The root of David has died to ransom the slaves. Does our God intend to dwell again with us this Christmas? He does. He did. He will again. Let us not watch this moment pass by. Let us prepare well.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Behold, the Lord will come, and all his holy ones with him. And on that day there will be a great light.*

Isaiah: *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord ... With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth ... The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them ... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*

Psalms: *May righteousness flourish until the moon is no more. He has pity on the weak and the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight. May all nations be blessed in him.*

Luke: *The seventy returned with joy ... Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants ... No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said: Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see.*

Communion Antiphon: *The Just judge will bestow a crown of righteousness on those who eagerly await his coming.*