

Sermon for 27.11.16

Today is the first Sunday of our Advent Season.

Advent is a time of waiting and preparing. The word Advent simply means “coming” and in the Christian sense refers to a past, present and future event.

The first coming of Jesus Christ; the Christ living among us in the present time in the Holy spirit and the future event, the Parousia, the second coming of Jesus Christ at the close of the age.

The intricacies of this past, present and future event, are interconnected and woven together by the love of God for his entire creation.

A glimpse of the end time according to Matthew – and the gospel writer has dedicated all of chapter 24 where Jesus reveals the end of the age – can have a very positive effect on our daily life in the present time.

It can guide us, not through fear, but through a genuine desire to make real in the present time, the beauty of fulfilment.

The Old Testament reading from Isaiah and the Psalm provide beautiful imagery of the fulfilment of time.

Isaiah looks forward to “the days to come”, to the future when God will finally establish his kingdom. All the nations of the world will stream to it, to worship God in his temple, to know his ways and to walk in his paths.

It will be a time of justice and peace, a time of total fulfilment for all. No swords, only ploughshares.

And the psalm today sings about a time when Jerusalem built as a city that is at unity in itself.

In the Gospel Jesus speaks into **all time** and urges us to be aware, alert, and awake to his presence.

He describes the days of Noah, when people were careless in the things that pertain to God.

They were quite unprepared and the flood came and swept them all away.

The coming of the Son of Man will happen unannounced in the same way. There will be no last minute warning. Some will be ready and others will not.

The heart of the message is to be awake, ready, prepared and watchful. And they are not words meant to terrify us but to encourage, to calm, to instil trust. For when we can watch for him in a receptive way, prepared to trust him with our very lives, we won't have to fear the unexpected like a thief in the night.

Paul in the epistle grounds us in the here and now.

He urges us to walk in the light of Christ - to walk always as a child of the light.

And we remember at our baptism a candle was lit for us from the paschal candle connecting us to the light of Christ and the first Easter event.

And today when we lit the first candle on our advent wreath we responded with the words "let us walk in the light of Christ. "

Now how we do that particularly in the Advent season, is to wait and prepare for what is to come.

For we are waiting and preparing for more than a baby in a manger as beautiful as the arrival of a new born is.

In faith we are preparing for a birth in us – an arrival of someone in our heart who comes especially to embrace us, connect with us, accompany us and lead us into a knowing of how to love God with our whole heart and how to love each other as ourselves.

We are waiting and preparing for a birth that opens the way to our newness, our freshness, our freedom in a totally different way of life that we have not experienced before. One that teaches us about the intimacy of relationship, that is patient without all or nothing demands.

A relationship without rigorist ways yet always long suffering, without hurry and without exactingness, but gentleness, understanding and guidance.

What we prepare for this advent is a consciousness as revealed by Christ, as the opening of the mind and heart to the divine presence.

In faith we are waiting and preparing to be awakened from our slumber as Paul writes in Romans.

Advent is a time of waiting and preparation to be awake and alert to Jesus Christ who is coming to us and birthing in us at all times.

The Lord be with you.