

First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2016

"The Lord Jesus draws near - be ready to welcome his coming"**Reading 1:** Isaiah 2:1-5**Responsorial Psalm:**

Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

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

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Matthew 24:37-44

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 24:37-44*

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Meditation: Why did Jesus compare "the coming of the Son of Man" with the days of Noah? Scripture tells us that both events point to a prophetic warning to prepare for a day when the Lord comes to execute judgment and separation for those who believe in God and follow him from those who reject God and refuse to follow his ways. Separation is an inevitable consequence of the choices people have made for their lives - whether for God or against God. In the time of Noah people refused to listen to God and they ignored his warning of judgment and as a consequence they were unprepared to get right with God before it was too late. Jesus reminds his disciples to listen to his word and to put their security and refuge in him.

The days of Noah

The Book of Genesis describes why God decided to bring judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth at the time of Noah: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5), "with corruption and violence spreading everywhere" (Genesis 6:11-12). In Noah's day, God swept away in the great flood all who chose the way of evil and corruption rather than truth and righteousness. God intended to start over again with a people who would obey him and do what was right and just. Noah and his family alone were spared destruction because they listened to God's warning while the peoples around them ignored God's voice and refused to turn away from their wrongdoing. They "ate and drank" and lived as if there were no consequences to the choices they made to ignore God and to do as they thought right in their own eyes. Their defiance turned to alarm when the torrential rains and flood waters swept them away to destruction.

The thief in the night

Jesus' second story of the thief in the night brings home the necessity for constant watchfulness and being on guard to avert the danger of plunder and destruction, especially under the cover of darkness and secrecy! While no thief would announce his intention in advance, nor the time when he would strike, lack of vigilance would nonetheless invite disaster for those who leave their treasure and their lives unguarded or exposed to theft and destruction. The intruder strikes when he is least expected!

The Lord draws near to you - watch with expectant faith and yearning hope

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the Day when the Lord would judge between the nations and establish peace over the earth. In that day the righteous - all peoples who believed in him and who listened to his teaching and instruction - would come to his holy mountain and house to worship him and dwell with him in everlasting peace (Isaiah 2:3-5). The Advent season reminds us that we are living in the time between the first coming and second coming of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus calls us to be vigilant in watching for his return and to be ready to meet him when he calls us to himself. The Lord gives us his Holy Spirit so that we may have the wisdom, help, and strength which come from God so we can turn away from sin, deception, and disobedience. The Lord Jesus wants us to embrace his way of love, righteousness, and holiness so we can be united with him and with our heavenly Father in lasting joy and peace. The Lord's warning and appearing on the final day of judgment will cause dismay and fear for those who are unprepared, but it brings joyful hope and confidence for those who now yearn and prepare for his return in glory. Their reward is God himself, the source of all goodness, truth, and beauty, and abundant joy and life without end.

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Many shops and places have already started with the Christmas decorations and sale. How do you see this influence of Christmas' mood in light of your faith?
2. How are you preparing for Jesus' coming? What changes do you need to make in your life?

"Lord Jesus, you have captured my heart for you. Make me strong in faith, steadfast in hope, and generous in love that I may seek to please you in all things and bring you glory and praise. Keep me ever watchful for the coming of your kingdom today and every day of my life"

OUR PARISH VISION – A PARTICIPATIVE CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.