

Advent II

Monday Ephesians 5:11-14

We Need Stirring

Unlike God, we really do need to be stirred. So we pray in the Collect for the Second Week of Advent, "Stir up our hearts, O Lord." How frequently kids think something is boring - the long church service, the trip to grandma's house, the second week of summer vacation. When boredom sets in, sameness does, blahness does, and blandness does.

Well, guess what kids? That is life. There is a sameness to life. Monday always gives way to Tuesday, Tuesday to Wednesday and so on. January always comes after December and February after January. Just as the constant purring of a cars motor or the gentle rain on a roof can lull us to sleep so can the everyday sameness of life. That is why we pray for the Lord to stir us up. Also the devil the world and our sinful nature are always whispering in our ears, "Go to sleep, go to sleep. Tomorrow you can pay attention to spiritual things. The next week you will get back to church. Soon you can start thinking about your Lord returning."

If the devil, the world and our sinful nature have their way we will doze, nap, and sleep till the trumpet sounds our Lord's return. So we ask our Lord to stir us. We ask Him to wake us. The Collect does not ask God to make us wake ourselves. No, it is a plea for God to act. If you ask someone to wake you at a certain time, upon whom does the burden of waking you rest? Not on you! You are asleep! It rests with whom you ask. We ask our Lord to wake us. You can be sure He does not fail to do it.

Prayer: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son that at His second coming we may worship Him in purity; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Tuesday Luke 3:1-6

How can We Make Ready for God?

We pray in the Collect this week for the Lord to stir us "to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son." How can we make ready for God? Have you ever seen them make the way ready for the President of the United States? They have dozens of police cars going out ahead of him closing down intersections before he gets there. They have helicopters in the air. They have secret service men on the roof tops. They sometimes have men walking right alongside the car. If *that* is what it takes to make ready for just a President who among us can make ready for God?

Not a one of us. We say in the explanation to the Third Article of the Creed, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or COME TO HIM." If we cannot even come to Him, then we certainly cannot make it so He can come to us. Or as we sing in the Christmas hymn, "Now Sing We, Now Rejoice," "Come from on high to me;/ I cannot rise to Thee."

John the Baptist tells us how to prepare for the Lord. He cries out, "Repent." One of the chief things we need to repent of is the belief that we can make ready for Christ. That if we just believe hard enough, be good enough, give enough, or go to church enough than we can somehow make ready the way of the Lord. We cannot.

Thanks be to God that our Lord comes to the helpless not the helpful; the unhealthy not the healthy, the sinful not the sinless. The way is paved for our Lord to come when we admit to being helpless and hopeless unless He does all the work. Notice when John preaches he says the valleys shall be filled in, the mountains shall be made low, and the crooked roads will be made straight. We do not do that; God does. John is not announcing what we are to do, but what God will do. After all who but God can fill in valleys, lower mountains, and straighten winding roads?

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Thursday Acts 1:6-11

I thought We were Celebrating His FIRST Coming?

Wait a minute! I thought we were celebrating the first coming of Jesus, you know the manger, the shepherds, Bethlehem, and all. Why then do we pray in the Collect for the Lord to stir us up in preparation for His second coming? Well, we are only doing what the Old Testament does.

The Old Testament speaks more about the second coming of Jesus at the end of the world than it does about His first coming. But very often the prophet speaks about the two together even though they would be separated by a long, long time. The prophet's view is often compared to a man looking at two mountains in the distance. They look very close together from where he is standing, but when he gets to the first, he can see there is in reality a great distance between the two.

Now that Jesus has come, we can see that there is long time between the first and the second coming. But the two are connected. He came the first time to prepare us for the second. The first time He came He purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. What do you do after you purchase something from the store? You take it home with you.

Jesus purchased you on the cross, not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He comes again in glory, visibly to take His purchases home.

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Friday John 4: 22-23

Pure Worship

We pray in the Collect for this Second Week of Advent that "We may worship" our Lord Jesus "in purity." Does that mean that our clothes are always clean? Does that mean that our face is always washed? Does that mean that we do not fidget too much in church? Nope. Pure worship says Jesus in our Bible reading is "in spirit and in truth." It is not a matter of the outside; it is a matter of the inside.

Pure worship is to come to God based on His pure Word. Though we are sinners, though we are unbelieving, misbelieving, doubting sinners, we can come to Him based on what He says. He says that we are His children in Baptism. In Baptism we were brought into His family. So now as "dear children ask their dear father," we can approach our heavenly Father. We do not have to be put off by our sins, our shortcomings. You see since He has come to us in Baptism, we can come to Him. In Baptism, Christ has been put on us says St. Paul in Galatians, so we are beloved sons and daughters of God. What would not a father do for his much loved son or daughter?

From this pure truth, comes pure worship. The spirit of pure worship comes from what God has done for us. Praise, thanks, trust all flow from the great things God does for us. Pure worship is not based on what we do; it is based on what God has done and still does for us. It is based on the fact that what makes God's day is not what We do for Him but what He can do for us. As Jesus says in Luke 12:32, "It is your Father's good pleasure to GIVE you the kingdom."

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Saturday Revelation 22:12-14

O Lord How Shall We Meet You?

We pray in the Collect for the Second Week of Advent that we might be stirred up to meet the only-begotten Son at His second coming. This naturally brings to the minds of sinners the Advent hymn, "O Lord How Shall I Meet Thee?" Since He comes to "judge the quick (living) and the dead" as we say in the Creed, thoughts of what we have and have not done can fill our minds.

Not so fast. How did people meet Him the first time He came? How did the shepherds meet Him? With smelly hands and dirty clothes they went right to Him. The angel had told them that they need not be afraid of Him; He was their Savior come to save them. How did the wise men meet Jesus? With joy that they had found the God-Man worthy of their worship. How did Simeon and Anna meet Jesus the first time? With fear, trembling, worried about their sins? No! With thanks and joy because He was their Savior!

That is how we will meet Jesus the second time He comes. We expect a Savior from heaven, a Brother, a Friend, a Father. The One who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yes, He will come not as the Babe in the Manger, not as the carpenter's Son, but as Cosmic Lord, Almighty God. But we will meet Him clothed in the pure, white robes He gave us at our Baptism. We will meet Him as friends and family, as sons and daughters. Does a son or daughter of the President of the United States worry about meeting him? Of course not, he's their daddy!

Prayer: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son that at His second coming we may worship Him in purity; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen