

Devotion on Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent - 11 December 2012, Anno Domini



The Second Sunday in Advent
The Collect.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Collect.

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be repeated every day, after the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas Day.

There is great power in the Communion of the saints taking the same prayers, the same bible text, the same bread, and the same cup all around the world.

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent is truly a Reformation prayer. It is an original composition of Archbishop Cranmer, himself. In his first Prayer Book, Archbishop Cranmer laments the drift away from the practice of reading the whole Bible through in one year of public worship. The practice had become altered and nearly lost during the centuries under the prelacy of Rome. A

restoration and return to Lectionary readings that would satisfy this remission was a primary goal of Cranmer in the development of the Prayer Book. This collect is unique in respect of its ending form. It omits the pleading clause at the end and falls upon the counsel of Colossians 1:27 with its assurance that all Scripture gives testimony of Christ. *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Col 1:27) The Collect is also evidence of the strong faith of the Reformer in returning to Bible-centered faith rather than the ultramontane errors of Rome.

The Collect for the First Sunday in Advent pointed from our present condition to our immortal eternity in Christ. Today's Collect is more of an Ancient Landmark from which we may comprehend the way that we should respond to the hope of that eternity future. Like all of the Collects of the Prayer Book, this one is a summarization of immutable truths laid out for God's people in His Holy Book. It begins with the address to the "Blessed Lord" as Father. This Collect can only be truly repeated by those who consider the Lord "Blessed."

Every profession has mentors and authorities of the profession to which to relate. A medical doctor refers to his books and manuals written by previous masters of the art of medicine – to research and clinical data. An attorney has his books of case law and points of precedence upon which to call. What has the devoted Christian? The Christian has, as Cranmer clearly avers in the first line of this Collect, "all Holy Scripture" that has been written for our learning. It might be pointed out here that meaningful learning does not take without diligent study and, another rule of learning: **effective** learning results in a change of **behavior**. Apart from all our efforts, however, to learn and know God by any means, come by the benefit of a grant of God.

The Collect outlines five primary means whereby we may "embrace, and hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life" that comes only by benefit in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us examine these five means below:

I Hear the Word of God written (medical science has revealed that the last sense to go at death is hearing); it is the means whereby our faith is enlarged: *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:17) In the Communion, we will be invited to **draw near by faith**. If you have not even heard the Word of God, how shall that faith be nurtured?

II Read them over again and again. Another law of learning is that meaningful repetition aids recall. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* (John 14:26) If we have not even read the Book, how shall its promises be called to our remembrance? Remember the two disciples on the sad road to Emmaus on the Sunday following the Lord's Passion? Forlorn and despondent, they knew not that the very Lord whom they presumed to be a dead Lord, was alive eternally and walked beside them.

"Are you a stranger in Jerusalem to not know of the things that have happened in these days?" "*What things?*" They then told Him of the horrible events of the false trial and crucifixion of Christ. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* (Luke 24:25-27)

Remember, my friends, in the Communion, how the eyes of these two disciples were finally opened to Christ - *And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.* (Luke 24:30-31) Then in verses 44 & 45 of Luke 24, Christ tells His disciples:

*And he said unto them, **These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.** Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,*

III Mark those Words of God that are written – just as we mark off the boundary lines when we purchase a plot of land to make it our own, we mark those wonderful words of God which we read to make them our own. They constitute the boundaries of our faith as measured from that Ancient and immovable Landmark. I love to look at the Bible of a venerable old saint and see that more verse are marked in those ragged pages than those that are unmarked. We do well to heed the sage proverb: *Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.* (Prove 22:28) While men are attempting to change meanings and powerful truths in the Bible through retranslations galore, the ancient Landmark stands immovable and immutable!

IV Learn them. Seek and ye shall find many hidden gems and treasures in the leaves of God's Word. The Holy Ghost will aid the diligent heart. The most important truths that we can learn for our well-being is not from a health digest, but from the Word of God. *The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* **Hosea 4:6** Please remember too, that law of learning mentioned aforetime: Effective learning results in a change of behavior – and not behavior only, but of heart, mind, and soul if it is God's Word learned.

V. INWARDLY DIGEST the Word: Jesus Christ is the Word Incarnate. **He is our Bread of Life**..... which is His Body – the church – must consume daily in order to be of healthy and living spirits. *I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.* (John 6:35)

Yes, we need Water with the Bread, and He is that also – the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's well came for the water of the world, but left with the water of life. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* (Rev 21:6)

That Bread of LIFE is much like the bread that we take physically. We prepare

it properly as in reverent and orderly worship.

We savor its wholesome aroma when it is piping hot.

We love the sweet aroma of God's soothing Words of Life.

We place it in our mouths and chew it with relish – just as we meditate upon that Word whose sweet-smelling aroma has drawn us to it.

We swallow that Bread or Word.

It goes into our stomachs where various enzymes combine to break the bread down into simple nutrients that can be used by the Body.

God's Word does the same in our hearts. Those special meanings God desires to impart to us alone are broken down and fed into our spiritual blood. It gives life to every cell of our spiritual being.

All of these things the COLLECT remind us from out of the Word itself. It will direct our inward hearts and our outward walk, too. It gives life, but not a temporary life, but that Water of Life that satisfies eternally!

The first Advent Sunday COLLECT very clearly tells us that we must put upon our countenance that great Light which is the Light of the World. He will be our armor and our covering for sin. We were those same who walked in darkness (Isa 9:2), who finally came to make our home there by sitting down in comfort among sinners (Matt 4:16) by sitting in darkness. Are you in the center of God's Light – that Light of the World which is Christ?