



Faithful Centurion Anglican Orthodox Church

The First Sunday in Advent

Sunday Report



Today was the First Sunday in Advent. This is the first day of the new "liturgical year"¹, a New Year's Day, so to speak. Coincidentally, we are in the first frontal weather of the year, with a bit of rain. Not really enough to do more than make it damp, but still! Sunrise brought 45°F and cloudy skies, by the time church started we were up to 57°F, not so bad! The clouds brought out 3 people for the service.

Gathering Song

Jack Arnold played *Amazing Grace* for the gathering song.

Amazing Grace

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

We try to pick our gathering songs to have a wonderful message, be easy to sing and suitable for guitar accompaniment. *Amazing Grace* is one of Hap's absolute favorites.

Propers

Each Sunday there are Propers: special prayers and readings from the Bible. There is a Collect for the Day; that is a single thought prayer, most written either before the re-founding of the Church of England in the 1540s or



¹ If you would like to know what the liturgical year is all about, there is an explanation near the end of this report.

written by Bishop Thomas Cranmer, the first Archbishop of Canterbury after the re-founding.

The Collect for the Day is to be read on Sunday and during Morning and Evening Prayer until the next Sunday. If you have a hard time remembering, "Do I read the Collect from last Sunday or next Sunday during the week?" Remember Sunday is the first day of the week. There are also two Bible readings, the Epistle and the Gospel. While they are "lessons", they are not the First Lesson and the Second Lesson, they are the Epistle and the Gospel. The Epistle is normally a reading from one of the various Epistles, or letters, in the New Testament. The Gospel is a reading from one of the Holy Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Collect is said by the minister as a prayer, the Epistle can be read by either a designated reader (as we do in our church) or by one of the ministers and the Holy Gospel, which during the service in our church is read by our minister or deacon.

The propers are the same each year, except if a Red Letter Feast, that is one with propers in the prayerbook, falls on a Sunday, then those propers are to be read instead, except in a White Season, where it is put off. Red Letter Feasts, so called because in the Altar Prayerbooks the titles are in red, are special days. Most of the Red Letter Feasts are dedicated to early saints instrumental in the development of the church, others to special events. Some days are particularly special and the Collect for that day is to be used for an octave (eight days) or an entire season, like Advent or Lent.

Today, the propers for today can be found on Page 90-92:

The First Sunday in Advent
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.

Dru Arnold read the Epistle for today, which comes from Paul's letter to the Romans, starting at the Eight Verse of the Thirteenth Chapter. Paul tells us to be self sufficient, but love and care for one another, do not commit adultery, do not murder, steal or lie. But more than that, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." For, if you love your neighbor, you will do no ill to him. "Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." We need to do this today, because the time of "our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." We hear often "The end of the world is near." And it may well be. But for each of us, this world's end comes when we leave for the next. Have we treated our fellow beings as



Jesus commanded us in God's name? Because in the answer to that is hidden the key to our next life.

OWE no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Hap Arnold read today's Holy Gospel which came from the Gospel according to Saint



Matthew, the Twenty-First Chapter, beginning at the First Verse. It is the story of Palm Sunday when Jesus came triumphant into Jerusalem. Jesus sent "two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." This was done that the prophecy of years gone past might be fulfilled of a triumphant entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem. The people expecting a Prince of this

World, "spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Rather than assuming the crown of this world, "Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."²

² Sometimes quoted as a reason for the church not to have rummage sales, the sellers were thrown out as they were cheating the people, selling the one legged sparrow in the morning as a "perfect specimen of

WHEN they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

THE EXHORTATIONS.

¶ *At the time of the Celebration of the Communion, after the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church, the Priest may say this Exhortation. And Note, That the Exhortation shall be said on the First Sunday in Advent, the First Sunday in Lent, and Trinity Sunday.*

DEARLY beloved in the Lord, ye who mind to come to the holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how Saint Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries. And above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man; who did humble himself, even to the death upon the Cross, for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained for us; he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give, as we are most bounden, continual thanks; submitting ourselves wholly to his holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. *Amen.*

an unblemished dove" without fault for a sacrifice, then reselling the same sparrow in the afternoon. They were indeed making the temple a den of thieves rather than a place of worship.

Sermon – Rev Deacon Jack Arnold – Time and Action

The First Sunday in Advent
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.

To cast off the works of darkness and don the armour of light, we must turn to Christ, who came to visit us, born in a simple and humble inn in Bethlehem. As His manner of birth, we must be humble as well, not boastful and proud like the rich³, but meek and lowly, to embrace light and cast off the works of darkness. Though He came in a rather humble manner, He shall return in a glorious and majestic manner, a rather stark contrast to His original incarnation, leaving no doubt who has come to lead us.



We must not be for God in speech only, but in deed. For many in the very same crowd who cried “Hosanna” on Palm Sunday were there early on Good Friday. What did they cry for then?

“Crucify Him, Crucify Him!”

Pilate asked for them to cry for mercy, they cried for vengeance on their Lord and Savior!

A swift 180° turn from “Hosanna to the Son of David”.

We must not be like them. We must put on the great Armour of Light and to reject our former lives of sin and vanity.

Through following His Word and Instructions, we shall be given a greater reward than anything existent on the Earth; past, present or future, that gift of immortal life, life for all eternity, that will outlast this physical world. To don the armour of light is not merely putting it on, you have to utilize it, and utilize the helmet, the buckler and

³ It is not worldly wealth is, in and of itself, bad, but rather the attitude it can bring, one of self-worth beyond that which is correct. Wealth often brings to us a “better than thou” attitude, which soon turns to “Holier than thou.” The kind of thing that was referred to when Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Mark 10.25

sword (Scriptures and Christ's teachings). You need the who complement of weaponry to go into combat with the Prince of Darkness in this fallen world.

Make no mistake, we are engaged in a World War with the Prince of Air, the Prince of this world for the souls of men, starting with our own, a World War which which has been going on since the beginning of time.

As individuals we may not experience victory here on earth. We may not know that savor, but we know that in the end, He will be victorious. We will win, for we are on His Side.

Cast of the dull worn robes of darkness, which lack luster, give no warmth, protect not from the heat, and put on the shining glorious armour of light. So kitted up, we walk in light, not in darkness where we may stumble and fall. Unlike moths, for us light is life, not the destruction of darkness.

Come, put on the Armor of Light and go forth to destroy that last enemy, death!

Be of God - Live of God - Act of God

Bishop Ogles' Sermon

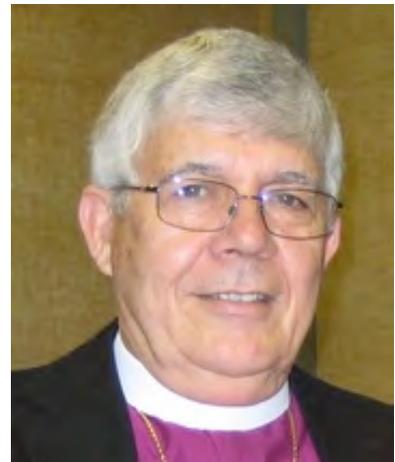
We are off fortunate to get copies of Bishop Jerry's sermon notes. Today is one of those Sundays. Today's sermon starts off with the collect, and like always, it will give you a lot to consider in your heart.

Sermon Notes

The First Sunday in Advent
2 December 2012, Anno Domini

The First Sunday in Advent *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.



Processional Hymn (included for our Reader audience):

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, YE MIGHTY GATES

*Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!
Behold, the King of Glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near,
The Savior of the world is here.*

*Life and salvation He doth bring,
Wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
We praise Thee, Father, now,
Creator, wise art Thou!*

*A Helper just He comes to thee,
His chariot is humility,
His kingly crown is holiness,
His scepter, pity in distress,*

*The end of all our woe He brings;
Wherefore the earth is glad and sings:
We praise Thee, Savior, now,
Mighty in deed art Thou!*

*O blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of joy He is,*

*Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
We praise Thee, Spirit, now,
Our Comforter art Thou!
Fling wide the portals of your heart;*

*Make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for Heaven's employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.
So shall your Sovereign enter in*

*And new and nobler life begin.
To Thee, O God, be praise
For word and deed and grace!
Redeemer, come! I open wide*

*My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide!
Let me Thy inner presence feel,
Thy grace and love in me reveal;
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on
Until our glorious goal is won.*

*Eternal praise and fame
We offer to Thy name.*

Georg Weissel

The COLLECT prayer for Advent makes reference to two significant comings of Christ. The first as a man, born of a woman, to fulfill those promises made sure in Abraham. His first coming was to save us from our sins and to bear the severity of judgment due to all sinners. The second mention is of His coming, not to be judged, but to receive His own and execute judgment against all who have rejected Him.

Advent Season heralds the Coming of the long-expected Jesus to save His people. The journey of Christ did not begin at Bethlehem, but in the Council of Heaven long before the worlds were made.

As we learn concerning Abraham, Christ says that Abraham longed to see His coming, and he saw it! The Coming of Christ passed through the life of Abraham.

The same road of Christ Coming has passed through the hearts of every Christian called and accepted. It is my prayer that that road has led to your heart and not found a dead-end there. The Gospel text (Luke 1:5-25) relates the preparation of the first coming of Christ in a physical body for the redemption of our souls. He came as a babe in a manger. However, John the Baptist was born of an aged mother, Elizabeth, by promise of God through Gabriel, much like the birth of another Child of Promise, Isaac. The miraculous birth of these two saints of God is dwarfed by that miracle of virgin birth which will accompany the Birth of God's only Begotten Son.

The first coming was humble and quiet – the Second shall light up the heavens with the Angel Choir and the trumpets of the Lord. His first coming provoked contempt from the rulers and the wealthy. His second coming shall strike fear and anguish into those rebellious hearts that rejected His first visit.

The coming of Christ is at least three-dimensional and not two. He came as a baby at Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. He is coming again at the consummation of all time. But He comes daily into the heart that is open to His coming. But His coming is even more than these three examples.

The moment that it was decreed by God, in eternity past before the worlds were made, Jesus was on that Coming Road. That road stretches all the way to the distant past in the dimness of eternity before time was. He has traveled that long road. Along the way, He has taken mercy upon Abraham and received him into His Kingdom, He received Isaac and Jacob and their spiritual Seed as well. In fulfillment and consummation of His promise to be our Redeemer, that road led to Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Galilee, Bethany, Sychar, and Jerusalem (to mention only a few examples).

That Road led eventually to a hill called Calvary beyond the western gate of Jerusalem where He died in payment of our sins upon the cross. The Road then led to a lonely tomb in the Garden, and three days later, to a resurrected glory. He walked the shores again of Galilee and witnessed to hundreds.

Then the Road led to the Mount from which Christ rose into the glories of His Father. The Road of His coming does not stop with the Ascension of Christ – it continues to the glorious Kingdom of His Father where Christ is preparing a place for all who are the chosen and elect of God.

The Road continues on to that point in time, of God's own choosing, in which there shall be no more time. Christ shall descend in glory riding upon a white horse, and leading the Armies of Heaven. His glorious Person shall be too brilliant for the sinner to behold. They shall hide in the covert rocks, and hide their faces from the glaring brightness of His coming. Those who drove the crude nails into His hands shall bow the knee along with Hitler and Mussolini, and Stalin, and Mao, and all desperate

sinners. But those who have received Him, shall be received BY Him to join Him in the air.

Do you wonder about the date and time of Christ's coming? Fret not. Perchance, He may come for you today. Rejoice in that hope.

Christ, being the Word, is our Bread of Heaven – our very Bread of Life! And how is Christ like Bread?

When we eat physical bread, it must be handled with clean, sanitary hands and vessels. The grain has been crushed as at Calvary. Many grains are crushed to make the bread just as many saints are crushed by the world. (Abp Cranmer)

The mixing of the bread is simple and plain without the adding of the leaven of sin. We bake the bread well, and then take it into our mouths to chew well before swallowing. This we do with God's Word. Our meditating on the Word is our 'chewing of it'.

We do not gulp it down on Sunday's only, but take time to chew it well. We swallow the bread and it goes deep into our bosoms to be digested and made into our very body and cell tissue. God's Word, too, must become a constituent part of our souls. The nutrients from the bread are then carried by the blood to every cell in our bodies. The nutrients from the bread give us life and energy. So does the Word of God, well-digested and delivered to every part of our heart (first) and then our souls by the blood (Holy Ghost). If we fail to consume that physical bread daily, we grow weak in strength (faith) and may even die without that Bread of Life.

The Bread is only formally taken in the Church at Holy Communion on special days of observance, but it must be taken casually every day, every hour, and every moment by those who love the Bread.

Have you had your bread today?

Bishop Dennis Campbell's Sermon

Bishop Dennis is a brilliant speaker. He is able to take biblical precepts and make them perfectly understandable, even to me. Oft he provides the text of his sermons and I take the utmost pleasure in passing them on:



Person, not Chance

Psalm 50, Malachi 3:1-6 & 4:4-6, Luke 1:5-25

The First Sunday in Advent

December 2, 2012

I think people often miss the point of the Scriptures by focusing their attention on the people in the Bible instead of the God of the Bible. I have, for example, heard many sermons on Genesis 37:4, which have been about parenting and the evils of favouritism by parents. Parental favouritism is a great evil, and the relationship between Jacob and Joseph and the rest of the sons of Jacob plainly show the devastation it can cause. But that is not the point of Genesis 37:4. The point is that God has a plan

for Israel, and His plan includes getting Joseph into Egypt to provide for Israel during the coming famine.

I think people make the same mistake with the passage we just read in Luke. They see a story about Zechariah and Elizabeth and John, but the passage is not really about them. The passage is about God. That's why it was designated to be read on the First Sunday in Advent, when we begin to focus our attention on what we are to believe about God.

What does this passage teach us to believe about God? First; God has a plan. The birth of John the Baptist was no accident. It was not through blind chance that Zechariah served at the table of incense that morning. It was not through blind chance that Elizabeth was unable to conceive a child. It was not through blind chance that she finally did conceive a child who was John the Baptist and did all of the wonderful things John did. God has a plan, and all of these events are part of the plan of God, to prepare the way of the Lord.

This means the birth of Christ was no accident. We say, "of course not, for Christ's sacrifice was planned before the foundations of the earth were laid, and He had to be born before He could die." True, but what about the timing and circumstances of His birth? The Bible makes it clear they were part of God's plan, too. God had been working in history to bring the world to the fullness of time when all things were prepared for the birth of the Saviour. Jacob and Joseph were part of that plan. Egypt was part of that plan. Moses and the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery were part of that plan. Ruth was part of it. David was part of it. Bathsheba was part of it. Babylon was part of it. Even Greece and Rome were all part of God's plan, and each played its part exactly as God, the Planner, directed.

Part of God's plan is the calling and redeeming of a people to be His own unique Kingdom. The citizens of His Kingdom are called out of many nations and backgrounds, but all are called out of sin and into righteousness. They are forgiven of sin and dressed in the righteousness of God Himself, who died for their sins in Christ. These people begin a new life in God's fellowship and blessings. Israel was the foundation of that Kingdom in the Old Testament. The Church of the New Testament is the continuation of that plan. God's promises to Israel are being fulfilled in the Church. We, who are in the Church live in the era in which God's promises are beginning to be fulfilled. The Bible calls this era, the "last days," meaning the last era before the return of Christ and the full completion of His plan.

But I want to move beyond the plan of God to the God of the plan. I want to know what it means that God has a plan. I'm going to make some statements here, and ask you to tell if they are correct or not.

First, only a mind can make a plan. If anything happens by blind chance, regardless of what happens, whether it be order or chaos, it is still only an accident. It isn't meant to happen and it isn't meant not to happen because there isn't anyone to mean or not mean it. Whatever happened was accidental, had no meaning or purpose, came from nothing and returns to nothing. Of course, blind chance is impossible, for even chance requires something to exist before anything can happen to it, and existence comes from God on the basis of His purpose and direction. So the existence of anything negates all possibility of blind chance.

But, here is the point; if only a mind can make a plan, God is a mind. God thinks. God has purpose, intentionality, intelligence, and thoughts. He is not a mere cosmic force. He is a mind.

Second, only a personal being has a mind. A galaxy does not have a mind. A planet

does not have a mind. Even that weed trimmer that won't start when we want it to does not have "a mind of its own." A cosmic "Force" as portrayed in the *Star Wars* movies would not have a mind. It would be simply a form of energy that can be used and controlled if you know the right tricks. That's why even religions that believe in a cosmic force also can believe in personal gods, like Krishna and Kali. Only a person can have a mind and only a mind can have a plan.

Third, God is a Person. He is a Being. In fact all personhood and being exist in Him. The salient point of our reading in Luke is not just that John was no accident; it is that John is part of a master plan, formed in the Mind of a great Person and Being who is able to both make a plan and to make His plan work.

So this is the first thing we emphasise in what we are to believe about God: He is a Person. He "lives," He thinks, He makes plans. He is a Being.

Second, God is able to make His plans work. Imagine all the generations it took to produce Noah. Then think of all the generations it took to produce Abraham and Sarah, and Moses and Mary and Joseph. All of these people existed and did what they did because God was working it all out in His own way and His own time. Think of all the "coincidences" that brought Zacharias and Elizabeth into the world, brought them to marry one another, and remain childless. Think of all the things that had to happen to get Zacharias into the Temple that morning and to serve at the incense altar. They weren't coincidences. They were all part of the plan of God working into place in His own time and His own way. They didn't happen by chance; they happened because God made them happen.

There is much more I want to say, but it will have to keep for other sermons. For now let me close with this point: God is able to make His plans reality. Because He is able, we can trust His promises. If He can cause John to be born at just the right moment in history, and cause Christ to be born at just the right moment in history, and even raise Him from the dead. He can keep His promises to you, now and forever.

--

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Rev Bryan Dabney of Saint John's Sunday Sermon

We are fortunate to have Bryan's Sunday Sermon. If you want people to come to The Truth, you have to speak the truth, expose the truth and live the truth. This is really a good piece and I commend it to your careful reading.



Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent

In our gospel lesson (St. Matthew 21:1-13) for today we learned that our Lord entered the city of Jerusalem fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah (9:9), Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Now such a description hardly reflects the image of a kingly personage of the ancient world because they, for the most part, rode about on horses. But consider also Zechariah 14:1-21. The prophet was given to speak again of the Messiah but in a much different fashion. He speaks of him coming with power and great glory to rescue Jerusalem and Judah from the nations which have been gathered together to destroy her. Specifically look a verse 9, And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. Thus he who came in humility to bring us the gift of salvation (Zechariah 9), will return in glory to triumph over the forces of darkness and usher in his kingdom (Zechariah 14).

These and other passages regarding the Messiah were given to the writers of Scripture by the Holy Ghost. The gospel accounts contain the very words of our Lord wherein he revealed to the disciples that he must suffer, die and rise to life again, and afterward, to ascend to the very presence of the Father until he returns. Every time we recite the words of the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds, we are proclaiming these important tenets of our faith.

Jesus Christ came to proclaim the good news of salvation; and agreeable to Scripture, he came first as a lowly and humble teacher. He came to satisfy that pressing need of humanity for a Saviour: one who would shed his blood on behalf of his elect so that they might have life eternal with the Godhead. The carnal and the uninformed have even questioned the necessity of his death. We might answer such a query by stating that when Adam and Eve sinned against God they brought death into this world, and ever after, their descendants would bear the infection of original sin. There is nothing human beings can do to save themselves from this hereditary disease. Self-justification cannot wipe us clean, nor could we offer to God anything approximating the value of our lives (Psalm 49:7-8).

Original sin made it necessary for God to enter his creation and take upon himself as the second person of the Trinity the sins of the whole world. As the St. John wrote in his gospel account (1:14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. He had to experience life as a mortal and yet remain sinless. As St. Paul penned in Hebrews (4:15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. To co-opt pagan Caesar's quote: Christ came, Christ saw, and Christ conquered.

Consider Isaiah 9:6, 7: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Nevertheless, the skeptic and the critic will continue to smirk in denial when they hear those verses. They cannot accept the King of Glory because they have not faith. The words of Scripture may reach their hearts, but the devil comes and snatches away their understanding of it preventing them from accepting our Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. Their foolish hearts have been darkened, and a veil has descended over their eyes. Thus they have been blinded by the god of this world to the truth of God's word written (II Corinthians 4:4).

We Christians know who our Lord is: he is the Christ, the Son of one, true and living God, who completed his work of redemption and has ascended into heaven where even now he is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us until he comes again. While many Jews in our Lord's day accepted him as the Messiah, most did not. And such has been true for people the world over in the years following his ascension. Before every people, kindred and tongue, God, through his witnesses, has set forth his words of life via the gospel of our Lord, for he is that one way, one truth and one life in whose name and under whose blood all who truly believe can find redemption from sin and death.

The Scriptures tell us of Christ's first coming, and of that day in the future when God will send him back to the earth. And when he comes again, he will be riding a fine white horse as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. St. John in the Book of Revelation (19:11-21) was given just such a vision. No more will he ride a humble donkey. No more will he come in humility and seeking to save the lost. He will come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead whose kingdom shall have no end (The Nicene Creed). He will come with great signs and wonders in the heavens and with a mighty host of his angels and saints.

The question is: Will you be ready? Are you watching for his coming? Have you prepared your heart to receive him? Will you run to him when comes, or will you run away from him? We know that he will come to collect his church, but that day and hour has not been given to us. Until then, we must be content to know the times and the seasons.

The devil and his minions will tell us that we have plenty of time to make up our minds about salvation, but such is a false choice. We should ever keep our hearts turned toward God and on watch for his imminent return. Keep your lamps trimmed and have extra oil so as not be caught unawares when the Bridegroom cometh to lead us to his marriage feast. We have not been called to wrath, but to salvation. Christ has promised us that he will come again for us and so it is our duty to work in his harvest until he calls us home; and so, in the words of an old hymn, "work for the night is coming when man shall work no more" for Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.

Let us pray:

O MOST holy God, who hast made provision for us unworthy sinners through the meritorious life, death, resurrection of thine only begotten Son; empower our witness to those who are mired in sin that they might learn of him and be saved; and this we ask in the name of him who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have a blessed week,
Bryan+

New Nametags

We had no new nametags today.

After Church Hospitality

Sadly, no after church snacks. The same story every week, is it not? The fact is that we are supposed to be on a low carb diet and there really aren't any low carb snacks that

appeal to us. So, with no fatted dog nut in sight, we were out of luck! Please someone, between now and next Sunday invent some no-carb dog nuts.

After church goodies providers as currently signed up:

Date	Name
9 December 2012	Opportunity Available – Second Sunday in Advent
16 December 2012	Opportunity Available – Third Sunday in Advent
23 December 2012	Opportunity Available – Fourth Sunday in Advent
25 December 2012	Opportunity Available – Christmas Day

People in our Prayers - <http://faithfulcenturionprayerteam.blogspot.com/>

Why? Prayer is an extremely important activity.

It is not that God knows not our needs, for He surely does. Yet, Jesus commanded us to ask God for those same needs. In addition to the obvious of asking God for help, offering thanksgiving and the like, prayer helps us focus our thoughts on how we might do God's work.

The Prayer Team of the Church of the Faithful Centurion was established to help our members and fellow Christians pray for those in need and to give thanks as well for the blessings we have been granted.

Who can be on the list? Do I have to be a member of the Church of the Faithful Centurion to be prayed for?

No! The only qualification to be on the list is that you want our prayer team to pray for you. We are Christians and are happy to pray for you, no matter who you are. If you want help from God, you are our kind of people.

What is the commitment from the prayer team?

Each member of the team will pray for the desired outcome at least once per day.

How do I get myself or someone else on the prayer list?

You can email one of the prayer team leaders: Jack - jack@faithfulcenturion.org or Dru - dru@faithfulcenturion.org, or call the church office at (619) 659-3608 or fill out a prayer card at church.

What should I ask for?

Depends on what you want. Some people merely want God to be asked to heal their ills and be mentioned by their first name, others want a specific outcome and / or have more of their personal information known to the team. Ask for what you want. It is your desire and need for prayer the team is attempting to meet. For typical examples, see the list below.

Updating the Team

If you are on our prayer list, or if you have submitted a person that you have asked us to pray for, please update one of the team members or Hap in person, by telephone or email. It helps to be able to pray specifically for these individuals including their specific needs; plus if they get better, it is nice to give thanks!

Please note that on the yellow (maybe green or orange if you get an old one) cards at church, you can ask that those to be prayed for have their names disseminated to the prayer team. Those names will be said in church and appear here. Or, you can ask that

their names and purpose be kept confidential, then only Hap will know to pray for them.

Prayer List Notice – If you have someone on the prayer list and their needs have changed, please let us know. We'd like to update our prayers to reflect the need and most important to give thanks!

Hurricane Sandy

Please pray for all those affected by Hurricane Sandy; for the more than 50 people who lost their lives, for hundreds injured, for the tens of thousands whose homes and businesses were destroyed. Pray that they might return their lives and world to a sense of normalcy and peace. Give them strength to rebuild their places in the world and the understanding that they and their friends and associates need to do the heavy lifting and not look to government.

Travel

Ken Howes is on travel this week.

Move

Ryan Hopkins has moved to Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, to study Dressage Riding through June 2013. Please pray for God's guidance in his life as he works and studies.

The Thomas Family is on a short tour assignment in Guam through August 2013. Please pray for the assignment to continue to go well for Kurt and for Mary and the kids to make new friends. In particular pray that *Kristyna* and *Mitchell* will develop good friends and school mates there so as to further their development as both Christians and citizens. Things seem to be going well where the sun rises on the United States, so keep praying! Give thanks and ask for continued good developments.

Birthday

Don Patton celebrated his 50th birthday 13 November 2012.

Marriage

Elizabeth and *Gunnar* were married on 17 November 2012. They ask that you pray for God's guidance in their lives as they move from being two individuals to a single unit and help them to form their new family.

Departed

Suz passed away the week of 18 November 2012. Please pray for family members who remain behind.

Don passed away on 1 December 2012 after a hard battle with cancer. Please pray for family members who remain behind and help them to come closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Joy passed away on 1 December 2012 after leaving hospice to return home to spend her final days with her family. Please pray for family members who remain behind and help them to come closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Homebound or Infirm

Norma, Sara's mother is in a state of deteriorating health, both physically and mentally, with both onset dementia and Alzheimer's. She is slowly drifting away, though she still recognizes Sara. Please pray for both Sara and her mother to put their cares and worries on God's shoulders so they can deal with the many problems

involved.

In need of a miracle or understanding of God's Plan

Tor'e, of Oslo, Norway recently had a kidney transplant. Unfortunately his body has rejected the kidney, infection has set in. Without God's healing touch he will soon die. Please pray for the medical team treating him to pay attention and do their very best; pray also for confidence in our Lord for *Tor'e* and family.

Colleen has been battling pancreatic cancer over the last year and it has now spread to one of her lungs. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

Christine has cancer of the colon, which spread to her liver; she is receiving chemotherapy and is having difficulty eating. Please pray for the medical team treating her to pay attention and do their very best; pray also for confidence in our Lord for *Christine* and her family.

Todd and *Kenny* have both been fighting osteocarcinoma for over five years and have been told their time here on earth is nearing its end, absent a miracle from God. Both are ready to go home and leave the pain, but would like to stay. Please pray for them and their families.

Colonel Bud Day's cancer has returned. The outlook is not favorable. Bud has been an inspiration to all of us for years, this changes nothing. He is well at peace with our Lord and we all hope he stays with us for a while longer.

Surgery

Liz Strauch has a pineal cyst, which is causing various problems for her, headaches, dizziness and distress. She has committed to having it drained on 4 December 2012. This is a difficult and concerning procedure. Please pray for guidance for the medical people treating her, as well as for *Liz* and her husband *Ken*.

Thanksgiving and Continued Healing

Carol Stone, the sweet wife of *Mike Stone*, longtime friend and colleague of *Sara Simmons* as well as *Hap*, was helicoptered to hospital with an ultimate diagnosis of severe bleeding on the left side of her brain. She remains hospitalized, but seems to be making some progress.

Please pray for peace of mind and trust in God for *Mike*, guidance for the medical team treating *Carol* and strength for *Carol* as well as faith and trust. No one can ever understand the why of these things here on earth. *Sara* who passed this request on asks that you pray in both faith and hope.

Healing

Larry Howes suffered a fairly severe stroke. Please pray for trust in God and peace of mind for *Larry*, pray for the medical team treating him to pay attention and do their very best. There is a clot and also a bleed. That means the indicated treatment for one of those conditions is precisely the contraindicated treatment for the other. He is oriented, but has weakness on one side, slurred speech and a facial droop. He already had other health problems. His vital signs right now are stable. He is in the ICU at Mercy Hospital in Springfield, MA. Pray for his entire family, in particular his brother *Ken* and sister *Margaret*. Please pray for a complete and rapid recovery for *Larry* and trust in God for the entire family that they might let God carry their worry.

Muriel Pappin broke her hip in a fall and had surgery on 21 November 2012; please give

thanks for a successful surgery and a rapid and full recovery.

Lou an elderly woman in the hospital with pneumonia,

Juanita is a young girl who was in a coma because of a blood disease. She has not come out and is gaining strength. They are awaiting results from blood samples. Her family thanks you for your prayers and asks that you continue.

Barbara had an accident while cooking and the pressure cooker blew up in her face, causing second and third degree burns over her face and upper body. Because of this she has incurred kidney problems and may need a transplant.

George had foot surgery. Please give thanks for the surgery and pray for a full and rapid recovery.

Nellie is in the emergency room of a hospital in a great deal of pain. Please pray for peace of mind for her and guidance for the medical team looking for the cause and cure.

Lauralee Meade underwent a lumpectomy on Friday after Thanksgiving. A further anomaly has been discovered and she had additional preventative radiation treatment. Please pray for a complete remission of the cancer. Pray also *Lauralee* will maintain her great attitude and trust in God.

Kevin Gerhart discovered cancer on his neck. He underwent radiation and chemotherapy. Please pray for the medical team treating *Kevin* that they might pay attention, do their very best and find the source; that the treatment might be successful and he might live a long and healthy life to His honor and glory. Pray also for trust in God and peace of mind for *Kevin*, his wife and family.

Bill, Sara's husband, had a third abdominal surgery on 22 November 2011, to remove a tumor. *Bill* is doing better keeping the doctor's instructions, for which we are all grateful, including taking chemotherapy once a day for two more years. He has radically decreased the consumption of alcohol and eating at least mostly properly. Please pray for help for him to continue do all this. Please pray also that *Bill* might turn his heart outward to help those around him, as well as live a long and healthy life to the honor and glory of God. Pray also for peace of mind for *Bill* and his wife *Sara*.

Kay Denton (Mrs. *Kay*) hip has deteriorated to the point walking is a slow and painful process, but she manages. Please pray for continued peace of mind for Mrs. *Kay* and her family. Give thanks for her trust in the Lord and her positive attitude.

James L. Cavanah had surgery the afternoon of 10 February 2012, to remove two small but cancerous tumors. *James* is a minister with the AOC in Savannah, Georgia. Please pray for his recovery and remission from the cancer. Give thanks for the surgery and pray for both him and his family to allow God to carry their worries while he recovers.

Steve Sundberg had a heart attack after Easter 2011. After some time, the medical team treating him decided he was not a candidate for stents and a five-way heart bypass was performed the week of 6 June 2011. Please pray for his complete recovery and for his three children and family who are very worried about him, pray also for his trust in our Lord and for both him and his family to let God carry their worries while he recovers.

Matt Alcantara, age 15, has Osteosarcoma (bone cancer), a very rare and often lethal form of cancer with limited treatment options. This is a disease that is about 90 percent fatal in a couple of years. He has no hip joint on one side, but he walks and swims! Courage? Guts? You bet! Matt and his mom just came back from Houston at the Cancer Center for what was hoped to be a routine every four month bone scan. The scans were done on schedule, but a couple of new spots showed up. After Matt's San Diego doctors conferred with the Houston doctors to figure out what these spots mean, it turned out they are new and old injuries with no bad meaning. In effect they are CLEAN SCANS. Matt and his family ask you to give thanks for the super results. Please also give thanks for the great faith of Matt and his entire family. Their faith and trust is a wonderful example for each and every one of us. But, now is not the time to stop praying. Actually, it never is the time to stop praying!

Judith Clingwall, is afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). She is currently in Laurel Place, an extended care facility in Surrey, British Columbia. Judith's condition has worsened recently. She is no longer able to stand, in fact she has a lot of trouble sitting upright. Judith is depressed and wants to go home to watch her birds, which given everything seems unlikely at present. Please pray for her to take an active part in her own life, for her strength, peace of mind, trust in God and remission of the disease so she might return home to her family. Pray also for strength for her husband Martin as he deals with all the problems and stress of Judith's situation.

Becky Madden is paralyzed from the neck down as the result of a tragic shooting accident. Her husband is doing his best to take care of her; it is hard and he is learning the best he can. Please pray for further recovery for Becky, as well as strength and guidance for her husband.

Vince (age 15), reoccurrence of Osteosarcoma, recent testing found a nickel sized tumor in his lungs. The doctors are consulting with a specialist in Houston. Please pray for guidance for the medical team and for peace of mind for Vince and his family.

Obra Gray continues to take day by day. Please continue to keep Obra in your prayers, and give him the strength of knowing the Lord is with him and will never forsake him. Obra needs security of what lies ahead of him, and only the Lord can grant the solace to answer his prayer.

Guidance

Sara asks that you pray for guidance for her as she deals with the stresses of her family and life. Pray that she can separate those things which she can affect from those things which she cannot and give her grace to accept that she cannot do everything and can only change those things within her control.

Jacquie to open her heart to God and accept His Love and Grace.

Hap and *Ryan* both ask you to pray they might be able to trust God will help them make the right decisions at the right time and not to worry uselessly, to change those things they can change, accept those things they cannot change, sleep well to be able to do the correct things with a clear head and that they will open their hearts to the Holy Ghost.

Guidance for Ministers

Ken Howes has been invited to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba,

Canada to preach. There is a possibility of a call to that church, a 600-member church with weekly services in German and English. His ability to speak German was what prompted their interest in Ken; He will be preaching in both languages this Sunday. Please pray for Ken, my family and St. Peter's. Pray also for Ken to not worry about his brother Larry.

Rev LTC Al Ryan has been appointed Deacon-In-Charge of the mission parish of St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church, Anglican Church in America (ACA) parish in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. It is a small but growing mission, which has been plagued by clergy change. Al, the diocesan pilot, has been appointed for one year, during which time he is to help them identify what their needs are for a vicar. He has done this before and asks you to pray for God's help one more time; not only for himself, but for the parish.

Armed Forces & Contractors

Airman Donny Patton (Kadena AB, Japan), Jordan (USMC – Fleet Marine Force - Pacific), Trevor (USAF - KC-10 Boom Operator), Trevor (USN – Whidbey Island, EF-18 Pilot), Kurt Thomas (USN – Guam)

Persecuted

Around the world, Christians are under attack, not only in the Muslim world, but from Hindus and others in India. Also, they are under continual attack in the name of "Separation of Church and State" in the western world, as it becomes actively atheist or pro-devil buddy. Please pray for God's guidance and protection for all persecuted Christians and those around them.

Thanksgiving

Hap Arnold gives thanks for safe travel the past week.

Various Special Requests

We ask that you pray, please ask God that the Holy Ghost might give you insight into how you might make the lives of your friends and family better. Remember helping others is not just those who you don't know!

Please join us in praying that the *Free Teen Guitar Class* will be continue to be an opportunity for God to work in the lives of the kids and their families. Please ask God to guide the class to new opportunities to make Him known to others. Help us to let the love of our Lord shine through us into their lives, putting Him first, so that He might enter in to their hearts and lives.

Question that only you can ask

What would you like to know about our history, what we believe, what we do or how we operate? Hap is looking for material for the continuing education class and *Thought for the Day* material. Help us help you. Please send your question to Hap so we all can get an answer. Just because you don't know the answer to your question doesn't mean you are the only one who doesn't know. But, if you don't ask, no one will know.

What is the "Liturgical Year"?

Liturgy based Christian churches who consider themselves catholic, or universal, use a Christian Calendar which has a pre-set annual cycle of liturgical seasons which determines when Feasts, Memorials, Commemorations, and Solemnities are to be observed and which portions of Scripture are to be read.

Distinct liturgical colors are used in connection with different seasons of the liturgical

year. The dates of the festivals vary somewhat between the Western (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Protestant) churches and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, though the sequence and logic is the same.

The dates of many feasts vary from year to year (Moveable Feasts) due to the variation in the date of Easter, and all other dates follow from that. The extent to which the feasts and festivals are celebrated also varies between churches; in general Protestant churches observe far fewer of them than Catholic and Orthodox churches, and in particular are less likely to celebrate feasts of the Virgin Mary and the Saints.

The liturgical cycle divides the year into a series of seasons, each with their own mood, theological emphases, and modes of prayer, which can be signified by different ways of decorating churches, vestments for clergy, scriptural readings, themes for preaching and even different traditions and practices often observed personally or in the home.

In churches that follow the liturgical year, the scripture passages for each Sunday (and even each day of the year in the Anglican tradition) are specified by a list called a lectionary. Anglicans and Lutherans have traditionally followed the lectionary since the days of the Protestant Reformation. Since the 1960s, the adoption and use of lectionaries in other Protestant churches (Methodist, Reformed, United, etc.) increased. This has led to a greater awareness of the Christian year among Protestants in the later decades of the 20th century, especially among mainline denominations.

Biblical calendars are based on the cycle of the new moon. The year is from the first new moon on or after the spring equinox to the next new moon on or after the spring equinox, rather than an arbitrary starting point like the modern calendar.

Western Christian liturgical calendars are based on the cycle of the Roman or Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, including Lutheran, Anglican, and Protestant calendars since this cycle pre-dates the Reformation.

Generally, the liturgical seasons in western Christianity are:

- Advent
- Christmas
- Green Season (Time after Epiphany)
- Lent
- Easter
- Green Season (Time after Trinity)
-

Advent From the Latin *adventus*, "arrival" or "coming", the first season of the liturgical year begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Historically observed as a "fast", its purpose focuses on preparation for the coming Christ.

Although often conceived as awaiting the coming of the Christ-child at Christmas it also points towards the final coming of Christ.

This period is marked by the Advent Wreath, a garland of evergreens with four candles. Traditionally, the wreath is made of four candles in a circle of evergreens. Three candles are violet and the fourth is rose. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday of Advent. Although the main symbolism of the advent wreath is simply marking the progression of time, the church attaches themes to each candle, most often 'hope', 'faith', 'joy', and 'love'. Color: Violet or Blue. On the third Sunday of Advent, also called Gaudete Sunday, Rose/Pink is used.



Historically, the primary sanctuary color of Advent is Purple. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. Purple is still used in Catholic churches. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us, is to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

To reflect this emphasis, originally Advent was a time of penitence and fasting, much as the Season of Lent and so shared the color of Lent. In the four weeks of Advent the third Sunday came to be a time of rejoicing that the fasting was almost over (in some traditions it is called Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for "rejoice"). The shift from the purple of the Season to pink or rose for the third Sunday Advent candles reflected this lessening emphasis on penitence as attention turned more to celebration of the season. Churches other than Anglican have changed colors and emphasis on the whole wreath, we remain true to tradition. Maybe we are just slow learners or not so open to change for change' sake.

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival. " The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life. In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power. That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's entry into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption", it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself. "

I'd like to get a different point across or announce something

If you have a different point of view, I would be happy to give you room to get your point across. While this publication is my perspective on events, I recognize not everyone may agree and that some people would like to express their own opinion. If you want to write something, please forward your item to Hap (with a note as to

whether or not you would like editing help) to: hap@faithfulcenturion.org.

The meaning of Christmas
Little Orphan at Christ's Christmas Tree

by Fyodor Dostoevski (1887)

I commend to you one of my favorite Christmas stories from the days of my early youth. It is written by the Russian author, Fyodor Dostoevski, and, in its quaint manner, reminds us of the true and eternal meaning of Christmas. As a child, it touched me deeply, but as an adult, it still touches my heart with the fire of love. I hope you, too, will enjoy it as I do.

- Jerry Ogles

What a fine example of leaving behind the pain of this world for the Joy of His. There should be no fear of death for the faithful. We are expected to do our best here, to exist here as long as we can do it following His Rules. But, to fear death? There is no death to fear. That is His Gift to us.

- Hap

"No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty." - CS Lewis



I
In a large city, on Christmas eve in the biting cold, I see a young child, still quite young, six years old, perhaps even less; yet too young to be sent on the street begging, but assuredly destined to be sent in a year or two.

This child awakes one morning in a damp and frosty cellar. He is wrapped in a kind of squalid dressing-gown and is shivering. His breath issues from between his lips in white vapor; he is seated on a trunk; to pass the time he blows the breath from his mouth, and amuses himself in seeing it escape. But he is very hungry. Several times since morning he has drawn near the bed covered with a straw mattress as thin as gauze, where his mother lies sick, her head resting on a bundle of rags instead of a pillow.

How did she come there? She came probably from a strange city and has fallen ill. The proprietress of the miserable lodging was arrested two days ago, and carried to the police station; it is a holiday to-day, and the other tenants have gone out. However, one of them has remained in bed for the last twenty-four hours, stupid with drink, not having waited for the holiday.

From another corner issue the complaints of an old woman of eighty years, laid up with rheumatism. This old woman was formerly a children's nurse somewhere; now she is dying all alone. She whines, moans, and growls at the little boy, who begins to be afraid to come near the corner where she lies with the death rattle in her throat. He has found something to drink in the hallway, but he has not been able to lay his hand on the smallest crust of bread, and for the tenth time he comes to wake his mother. He finishes by getting frightened in this darkness.

The evening is already late, and no one comes to kindle the fire. He finds, by feeling around, his mother's face, and is astonished that she no longer moves and that she has become as cold as the wall.

"It is so cold!" he thinks.

He remains some time without moving, his hand resting on the shoulder of the corpse. Then he begins to blow in his fingers to warm them, and, happening to find his little cap on the bed, he looks softly for the door, and issues forth from the underground lodging.

He would have gone out sooner had he not been afraid of the big dog that barks all the day up there on the landing before their neighbor's door.

Oh! what a city! never before had he seen anything like it. Down yonder from where he came, the nights are much darker. There is only one lamp for the whole street; little low wooden houses, closed with shutters; in the street from the time it grows dark, no one; every one shut up at home: only a crowd of dogs that howl, hundreds, thousands of dogs, that howl and bark all the night. But then, it used to be so warm there! And he got something to eat. Here, ah! how good it would be to have something to eat! What a noise here, what an uproar! What a great light, and what a crowd of people! What horses, and what carriages! And the cold, the cold! The bodies of the tired horses smoke with frost and their burning nostrils puff white clouds; their shoes ring on the pavement through the soft snow. And how every body hustles every body else! "Ah! how I would like to eat a little piece of something. That is what makes my fingers ache so."

II

A policeman just passes by, and turns his head so as not to see the child.

"Here is another street. Oh! how wide it is! I shall be crushed to death here, I know; how they all shout, how they run, how they roll along! And the light, and the light! And that, what is that? Oh! what a big window pane! And behind the pane, a room, and in the room a tree that goes up to the ceiling; it is the Christmas tree. And what lights under the tree! Such papers of gold, and such apples! And all around dolls and little hobby-horses. There are little children well-dressed, nice, and clean; they are laughing and playing, eating and drinking things. There is a little girl going to dance with the little boy. How pretty she is! And there is music. I can hear it through the glass."

The child looks, admires, and even laughs. He feels no longer any pain in his fingers or feet. The fingers of his hand have become all red, he cannot bend them any more, and it hurts him to move them. But all at once, he feels that his fingers ache; he begins to cry, and goes away. He perceives through another window another room, and again trees and cakes of all sorts on the table, red almonds and yellow ones. Four beautiful ladies are sitting down, and when any body comes he is given some cake: and the door opens every minute, and many gentlemen enter. The little fellow crept forward, opened the door of a sudden, and went in. Oh! what a noise was made when they saw him, what confusion! Immediately a lady arose, put a kopeck in his hand, and opened herself the street door for him. How frightened he was!

III

The kopeck has fallen from his hands, and rings on the steps of the stairs. He was not able to tighten his little fingers enough to hold the coin. The child went out running, and walked fast, fast. Where was he going? He did not know. And he runs, runs, and blows in his hands. He is troubled. He feels so lonely, so frightened! And suddenly, what is that again! A crowd of people stand there and admire.

"A window! behind the pane, three pretty dolls attired in wee red and yellow dresses, and just exactly as though they were alive! And that little old man sitting down, who seems to play the fiddle. There are two others, too, standing up, who play on tiny violins, keeping time with their heads to the music. They look at each other and their lips move. And they really speak? Only they cannot be heard through the glass."

And the child first thinks that they are living, and when he comprehends that they are only dolls, he begins to laugh. Never had he seen such dolls before, and he didn't know that there were any like that! He would like to cry, but those dolls are just too funny!

IV

Suddenly he feels himself seized by the coat. A big rough boy stands near him, who gives him a blow of his fist on the head, snatches his cap, and trips him up.

The child falls. At the same time there is a shout; he remains a moment paralyzed with fear. Then he springs up with a bound and runs, runs, darts under a gateway somewhere and hides himself in a court-yard behind a pile of wood. He cowers and shivers in his fright; he can hardly breathe.

And suddenly he feels quite comfortable. His little hands and feet don't hurt any more; he is warm, warm as though near a stove, and all his body trembles.

"Ah! I am going asleep! how nice it is to have a sleep! I shall stay a little while and then I will go and see the dolls again," thought the little fellow, and he smiled at the

recollection of the dolls. "They looked just as though they were alive!"

Then he hears his mother's song. "Mamma, I am going to sleep. Ah! how nice it is here for sleeping!"

"Come to my house, little boy, to see the Christmas tree," said a soft voice.

He thought at first it was his mother; but no, it was not she.

Then who is calling him? He does not see. But some one stoops over him, and folds him in his arms in the darkness: and he stretches out his hand and--all at once--oh! what light! Oh! what a Christmas tree! No, it is not a Christmas tree; he has never seen the like of it!

Where is he now? All is resplendent, all is radiant, and dolls all around; but no, not dolls, little boys, little girls; only they are very bright. All of them circle round him; they fly. They hug him, they take him and carry him away, and he is flying too. And he sees his mother looking at him and laughing joyfully.

"Mamma! mamma! ah! how nice it is here!" cries her little boy to her.

And again he embraces the children, and would like very much to tell them about the dolls behind the window pane. "Who are you, little girls?" he asks, laughing and fondling them.

It is the Christmas tree at Jesus's.

At Jesus's, that day, there is always a Christmas tree for little children that have none themselves.

And he learned that all these little boys and girls were children like himself, who had died like him. Some had died of cold in the baskets abandoned at the doors of the public functionaries of St. Petersburg; others had died out at nurse in the foul hovels of the Tchaukhnas; others of hunger at the dry breasts of their mothers during the famine. All were here now, all little angels now, all with Jesus, and He Himself among them, spreading his hands over them, blessing them and their sinful mothers.

And the mothers of these children are there too, apart, weeping; each recognizes her son or her daughter, and the children fly towards them, embrace them, wipe away the tears with their little hands, and beg them not to weep.

And below on the earth, the concierge in the morning found the wee corpse of the child, who had taken refuge in the courtyard. Stiff and frozen behind the pile of wood it lay.

The mother was found too. She died before him; both are reunited in Heaven in the Lord's house.

THE END.

Epistleers

We post the list of Epistle Readers in the Sunday Report each week so you can either plan your attendance or your pre-reading as the spirit so moves you.

Date	Reader
9 December 2012	Dru Arnold – Second Sunday in Advent
16 December 2012	Dru Arnold – Third Sunday in Advent
23 December 2012	Dru Arnold – Fourth Sunday in Advent
25 December 2012	Dru Arnold – Christmas Day

The near future, as well as Next Sunday

9 December 2012 – Second Sunday in Advent – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

16 December 2012 – Third Sunday in Advent – Holy Communion - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

23 December 2012 – Fourth Sunday in Advent – Morning Prayer - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**

25 December 2011 – Christmas Day – Holy Communion - Service start time 1000 (10:00 am); welcome or gathering songs before the service at 0945 (9:45 am); **Time 1000 (10:00 am); Location – 10603 Burrell Way, Descanso, CA**