

First Sunday of Advent – December 2, 2108

Jeremiah 13: 14-16 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2 Luke 21: 25-28

I continue to be amazed at the degree of anticipation that is shown during this time before Christmas. This not only involves the earlier and earlier appearance of decorations, but, even the traditional Advent calendar that marks the individual days leading up to Christmas are now marketed not only with small toys or pieces of chocolate, but also with pieces of cheese and samplings of whiskey. All this seems to be a bit of a stretch from the simplicity of an Advent Wreath.

The anticipation for the celebration of Christmas is, in truth, an anticipation of the celebration of the degree of God's love for mankind. It is the love expressed by God's coming into our world in the person of Jesus Christ.

As a Church, Christmas is more than just a look back to the past. It not only acknowledges that in Jesus Christ God entered into human history. But it also celebrates that this same Jesus Christ comes to us now in the Eucharist we share and that he will come again, at some time and in some way, when his mission is accomplished and his reign is accomplished and creation is ready to be returned to his Father, our Creator.



So it is that we hear our loving Father speak to us through the Scriptures we have heard today. Jeremiah directs his thoughts to the waiting for Christ's coming in history. His work will be to bring about what is right and just, to establish his kingdom, his reign, and to turn all of creation back on the road to the Father.

Jesus, in highly symbolic language, speaks of his coming again. It is a language that is not to be taken literally but to be understood as describing the completion of his work when creation is returned to our loving Father. It will be radically different than it is now. The *status quo* will no longer be upheld.

In the meantime, what are we to do? Both Jesus and Paul provide a reply. As we are convinced in our Faith that God, in Jesus Christ, came once into history, so we are also to be convinced that he will come again. Because of this, how we live out our daily lives is to be affected. Jesus is direct. Do not be tied up with self-satisfaction and worldly affairs. We have a higher and greater vision of the dignity and value of ourselves and thus our focus is to be on how God's presence can be better experienced in ourselves and, through us, in our world. Paul counsels that we are to grow in our love for another. We ought not be lethargic and think we have it made but, rather, continue on a path of growth and improvement on a daily basis.

These thoughts summarize well what the Season of Advent is to be for us. Preparations for Christmas are all around us. We, ourselves, also prepare for Christmas. These preparations by

others, or by ourselves, are a reminder of a greater preparation that we are to make. We are to improve ourselves and to improve our world. In this way we yo make the celebration of Christmas, which all of these things anticipate, a true celebration of our good and gracious God;