

November 28th, 2021

Year C; First Advent

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

Psalm 25: 1-9

Luke 21: 25-36

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Happy New Year! While the world goes wild for Black Friday, Cyber Monday and even the goodness of Giving Tuesday, the church quietly slips away from the maddening crowd and whispers, Happy New Year.

Today we begin a new year in the church.

The season of Advent which begins today with the first Sunday of Advent, marks a new year, that we will see in our gospel readings now focused on the Gospel of Luke, changes in our liturgy, and with our Advent wreath.

Our world may seem chaotic to us with our Covid numbers rising again in the county as the pandemic continues, as our leaders spend more time hurling disturbing insults to others rather than on governing, and as inflation raises the price of essentials for so many families teetering on the brink of homelessness.....and in the midst of all this chaos we light a candle called hope???

One of the many gifts of Advent is to remind us that our days, our times, are not the worst the world has ever seen. Despite ranting and raving from so many, Advent says, been there, stop looking for gloom and look for the hope, be the hope.

In our reading from Jeremiah, we hear the prophet offering hope that God will bring "..... justice and righteousness in the land". But we need to also know that Jeremiah wrote these words from a jail cell, with little hope in his own days, but still, hope for the larger world.

Our prayer this morning at the Advent wreath asked God to "give us the courage to hope."

But how? Our days and hearts can feel heavy, and we can find little energy for hoping.

The season of Advent offers us tiny gifts, simple paths.....Advent calendars, short

readings, trying the discipline of 5 minutes of quiet with our God while sitting or walking.

All of these tiny seeds can grow like the righteous branch that Jeremiah speaks of from his chains, a righteous branch to spring up in our days too.

I offer a few seeds for you to consider spending time with in these four short weeks of Advent:

This Advent calendar is from the Diocese of Maine. Two friends have been creating it yearly since 1988. The first calendar was created on a typewriter! Unlike Advent calendars from the store that start on December 1, this calendar starts today on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28.

Each block contains a bit of art, a scripture verse to read, and a word for the day...believe, be patient, visit.

At the bottom is a poem, new each year from Thomas, one of the creators. A lot packed into a single sheet! But if you would like more, Thomas also writes a brief daily reflection to go with the calendar. If you want to receive the daily reflection, you can go to Thomas's website, given at the bottom of the calendar, and sign up.

The two creators, Thomas Mousin and Merry Watters were both Methodist ministers in Vermont 30 years ago, when they started this calendar. Merry is now retired in Vermont. Thomas is now an Episcopal priest, serving a church in Portland Maine and as a chaplain with Southern Maine Hospice. Thomas moved to Maine in 2019 when his husband, The Right Reverend Thomas Brown, became the Bishop of Maine.

The creators do not include this final idea, this final seed, but I suggest you consider listening in your quiet with God as to who you need to hold in prayer, not offer a list of solutions for, but simply to hold in your prayers. Then add that person's name or initials to each day of your calendar.

Advent is such a short season but is a deep gift and blessings to us and our world, if we make room for it.

May we pray for the courage to hope and to find God in the chaos, to find God in our own darkness, and to find God in our broken and hurting world.

Amen.

The Advent calendar discussed in this sermon can be found at www.thomasmousin.com