

1 ADVENT NOVEMBER 28, 2010 CYCLE "A"

TITLE: WAKE UP ! CLOTHE YOURSELVES IN CHRIST.

READINGS: Isa. 2:1-5, Ps. 122, Rom. 13:11-14, Matthew 24:36-44

Isaiah cries out to us today, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Isa.2:5. And Paul nearly eight hundred years later writes to us in Romans, "It is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Rom.13:11-12. As we begin the Advent Season in preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we recognize one of the central themes of this season, that of light. We focus on the light which truly enlightens us, when we celebrate Christmas on December 25. The liturgy of the feast of Christmas is filled to overflowing with references to Jesus who comes as the true light of the world to enlighten every person who acknowledges him. Advent is given to wake us up and prepare us for that wondrous gift of the Father.

There have always been comparisons made between light and darkness. Darkness has always symbolized the ominous, the dire, sin and estrangement. And light brings positive attitudes, illumination, a sense of security and peace. The Psalmist makes the comparison to a sentinel who anxiously waits for the dawn. He says this is how we should wait or the Lord.

One very good example of the contrast between darkness and light is the nighttime satellite images of North and South Korea, and area of the world we have been hearing a lot about lately. When seen at night, South Korea is bathed in light with its cities gleaming in the blackness, while North Korea, still primitive in so many ways, is dark. The lack of visible light is not the only thing which accounts for North Korea's darkness. It has the most repressive government on earth. No radio, and televisions are wired to receive only government propaganda, cell phones are banned, and no access to Internet. It is officially atheist the last remaining "Stalinist" communist society. South Korea, on the other hand, has known Christian influence and many freedoms for over 100 years. In fact one of the largest Christian churches in the world is in South Korea.

Our readings today invite us to focus on the light, the true light that is Christ. They beg us to clothe ourselves in Christ and his righteousness so that we can truly celebrate that Holy Night. When the prophet Isaiah thought about the advent of the

Lord he envisioned a world unified in worship of God and committed to peace. Isaiah dreamed of a time when the nations and peoples of the world would join together in recognizing the sovereignty of God and declare, "Come let us go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that God may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths." Isa.2:3 He envisioned a peace when, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them." Isa.11:6. We believe and know that will certainly be accomplished, but only when the world lays aside the works of darkness, as Paul so eloquently writes, and puts on the armor of light. When the world makes the journey of Advent to kneel at the crib of the Savior.

But it begins with you and me. Is that where you are in Advent? We are the ones who not only have to journey again to the light of Bethlehem, but also invite others and enlighten them on the way. Walking in the light means walking in fellowship with God and with one another. That is just what we need to see and to do. Walking in the light is a summons to community and to peace. We live in a contentious and conflict-filled darkened world. As people of light, our job is to make the light of Christ shine ever more brightly in this world of darkness. Just how do we do that? We do it continually by walking in the light ourselves, by living a life of integrity and love, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a story which was circulated on the web about a Christmas pageant. When the day of presentation arrived, a young girl named Jana was so excited about her part that her parents thought she was to be one of the main characters, though she had not told them what she was to do. The parents of the children in the pageant were all there and one by one the children took their places. Jana's parents could see the shepherds fidgeting in one corner of the stage which was evidently intended to be a field. Mary and Joseph stood solemnly behind the manger. In the back three young wise men waited impatiently. But still little Jana sat quietly and confidently.

The teacher then began the presentation: "A long time ago, Mary and Joseph had a baby and they named him Jesus. And when Jesus was born, a bright star appeared over the stable." At that cue, Jana got up from her chair, picked up a large tin-foil star, walked behind Mary and Joseph and held the star up high for everyone to see. When the teacher told about the shepherds coming to see the baby, the three young shepherds came forward and Jana jiggled the star up and down excitedly to show them where to come. When the wise men responded to their cue,

she went forward a little to meet them and to lead the way, her face as alight as the real star might have been.

The little pageant ended. They had refreshments. On the way home Jana said, with great satisfaction, "I had the main part!" "You did?" her mother asked, wondering why she thought that. "Yes," she said, "'cause I showed everybody how to find Jesus!"

Ultimately that is what it means to walk in the light, to make the journey of Advent. And isn't that our job? Isn't it to show the world how to find Jesus? Isn't it so to live that people see in us year round the love of the holy child of Bethlehem? Just like Jana, we have the main part in all this, to show the world how to find Jesus.
Amen.

Pastor Barney