

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017  
Beginning of Year B

# Advent Sunday

Purple (Penitential)



First Sunday *of* Advent

## Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

## Isaiah 64:1-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

64 <sup>1</sup>Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence— <sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! <sup>3</sup>When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. <sup>4</sup>From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. <sup>5</sup>You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? <sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. <sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in[c] the hand of our iniquities. <sup>8</sup>But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>9</sup>Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.

**COMMENT:** Israel's need for redemption is set forth in this stark prayer written during the nation's captivity in Babylon in the 6th century BC. This beautiful poetry by an unknown prophet and some from his followers form much of Isaiah 40–66. As in all Hebrew prophecy, Israel's hope lies in its eternal relationship with God proclaimed in two metaphors in verse 8: "You are our Father" and "we are the clay, you are our potter."

### **The Coming of the Son of Man**

13<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,<sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.<sup>26</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.<sup>27</sup> And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

### **The Lesson of the Fig Tree**

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.<sup>29</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.<sup>30</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.<sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

### **No One Knows That Day or Hour**

<sup>32</sup>“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.<sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.<sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.<sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—<sup>36</sup>lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.<sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

**COMMENT:** Many church members frequently wonder why we begin preparing for the Christmas season with our focus on eschatology (the last things) and the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. We need to be reminded repeatedly that on the four Sundays of Advent preceding Christmas we read not only of Israel’s expectation of a Messiah who would save God’s people, but of the Christian Church’s expectation that Jesus Christ, who is that promised Messiah, will come again to establish God’s reign of justice, love and peace on earth. This passage sets forth what the day of Christ’s Second Coming will be like and how Christians should prepare for it. These words summarise the early church’s teaching. It draws heavily on the traditional Jewish apocalyptic tradition of the Day of the Lord, especially the Old Testament book of Daniel and the several apocryphal books of Maccabees and Esdras. Uncertainty as to the timing of the so called Second Coming is the key thought in this reading (verses 32-37). Two millennia later, many Christians have sincere, but serious difficulties with belief in the Second Coming of Christ. “Is faith in the Second Coming essential to faith and salvation?” some may well ask. Even the great creeds of the church give this element of doctrine relatively slight treatment, despite the emphasis placed on it by New Testament authors. As time has passed in human history, the matter has

become less and less meaningful. Modern scholarship often sought to reinterpret the New Testament references to watchfulness in terms of contemporary moral and spiritual opportunities for witness and service which should not be missed. However, in an all but forgotten book *Jesus Christ And The Christian Life*, the late Dr. A.B.B. Moore, of Victoria University, Toronto, wrote: “The idea of a second coming is an integral and important element of the gospel tradition which traces the shape of the Christian hope. It deals symbolically with the end of history and as such is not to be blue-printed by the predictions of the limited human mind. Indeed the scripture makes quite plain that when the act occurs and how it occurs is not man’s business but God’s. The purposes begun in and by Christ will be fulfilled in him and his shall be the victory. The judgment that has been inaugurated by him will not lapse or be defeated but will be completed by him as he establishes his kingdom. The coming of the Lord lies at the boundary of history beckoning man to share in God’s triumph and eternal order. Human achievements within history must always stand under the judgment of that order and reflect it in person and relationship.” This passage sets forth what the day of Christ’s coming will be like and how Christians should prepare for it. Uncertainty as to the timing of the Second Coming is the key thought.

### **Psalm 80:1-7, 15-19** *Qui regis Israel* Grail Psalter

**℟ Lord of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

<sup>1</sup> *For the Choirmaster. Intoned like “Lilies of Testimony.” Of Asaph. A Psalm.*

<sup>2</sup> O shepherd of Israel, hear us,  
you who lead Joseph's flock,  
shine forth from your cherubim throne  
<sup>3</sup> upon Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh.  
O Lord, rouse up your might,  
O Lord, come to our help. ℟

<sup>5</sup> Lord God of hosts, how long  
will you frown on your people's plea?  
<sup>6</sup> You have fed them with tears for their bread,  
and abundance of tears for their drink..  
<sup>7</sup> You have made us the taunt of our neighbours,  
our enemies laugh us to scorn. ℟

<sup>15</sup> God of hosts, turn again, we implore,  
look down from heaven and see.  
Visit this vine <sup>16</sup> and protect it,  
the vine your right hand has planted.  
<sup>17</sup> Men have burnt it with fire and cut it down.  
May they perish at the frown of your face. ℟

<sup>18</sup> May your hand be on the man you have chosen,  
the man you have given your strength.

<sup>19</sup> And we shall never forsake you again;  
give us life that we may call upon your name.

**℟ Lord of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** Another plea for the restoration of Israel's relationship with God is offered in this psalm. Once again, the ancient covenant between God and Israel gives hope to God's people.

### **Post Communion**

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Short Preface.**

And now we give you thanks because you sent him to redeem us from sin and death and to make us inheritors of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may with joy behold his appearing, and in confidence may stand before him.

### **Blessing**

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you now and forever. **Amen.**