

# Sunday Next Before Advent

Jeremiah 23: 5-8 & John 6: 5-14

November 24, 2024

Last Sunday, being the last in our Trinity season, we learned how God places such a high value on us that we should be called children of God. And as children of God, we need to understand that our citizenship is not of this world. We are citizens of heaven. That is why both lessons today turn us from life here on earth to life with Jesus, in Jesus, therefore, to life in heaven.

The first lesson is by Jeremiah, the prophet. This is one of those few Sundays where we have an Old Testament lesson in place of one from the New Testament epistles, but there's a reason behind that. The lesson goes back to the prophets so that we can be pointed to the first coming of Jesus. When Jeremiah wrote these words, the world was in a complete disaster for God's people. They were under the power of dictators and cruel world leaders. Many of them were put to jail because of their faith in God and others, less fortunate, were put to death for the same reason.

And yet in the middle of what looked totally hopeless, Jeremiah, the "weeping prophet," wrote a message of hope:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

So, God reminded Jeremiah that he was made to become the instrument of God.

Jeremiah was stirred up to recall his people to the promises of God. Jeremiah would stir up the Jews to remember that they were made to know God, trust in God, hope in God and wait for the promised Redeemer of Israel. He would prophesy and proclaim the coming of a King who would fulfill God's promise and who would give them the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which [would be] born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (St. John 1: 12, 13).

Now, here is a question for us: how can we become the instrument of God? How can we become the Jeremiah of this generation? For example, we are in this political environment where some people are angry or are hurting because the elections didn't go the way they expected. How can we minister to them as God's representatives?

Perhaps in the coming Advent, we ought to work on discovering our real spiritual needs. Like the people in today's Gospel, we ought to start admitting that we are hungry for something that God alone can give. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (St. John 6: 5).

God's Word alone can satisfy man's innermost hunger. Nothing else will be able to fully satisfy our desires, our needs, our ambitions, our dreams, or our deepest longings.

I think, as Christians, we should always reflect on the following principles:

If my religion is only a formal compliance with what everybody does around me; if it costs me no pains or trouble; if it lays me under no rules; if I have no careful thoughts and deep reflections about it; If I am seeking everything that can delight my senses, and make me feel good; spending my time and fortune in pleasures and worldly enjoyments; If I don't have time for prayer, fasting, bible study, how can it be said that I am working out my salvation with fear and trembling? How can I say that I am a Christian? How can I be able to show Christ's light to those around me?

If we should forget about all this, here is the question we must take home and meditate on this week: How can you make space for God this Advent?

We need God to graciously change the desires of our hearts—to bring them into line with his righteous ways—and we need the power of his Spirit to get us moving in the right direction. And so, we pray: **Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord, so that we may produce abundantly the fruit of good works and receive your abundant reward, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**