

Homily – Fr. Brad Neely

1st Sunday Advent: Year C – Sts Peter & Paul Nov 29, 2009

Jer 33: 14-16; 1 Thes 3: 12-4:2; Lk 21: 25-28, 34-36

We have the Advent wreath in our midst today. It marks the building of light through the Advent season, because we are anticipating Jesus, the light of the world, coming to us. The meaning of the word wreath, a noun, is known to all of us--- “something ring-like, something curving around, mostly for decorative sake.” If we look at the word, “wreathe” a verb--- we come to a word of action: wreathe is to envelop, to encircle something. Looking at the verb “wreathe,” we can attribute something very beautiful to our Advent *wreath*. The Messiah, born to Mary, wreathes the world, envelops the world in light--- encircles the universe with His glory.

The scriptures leading up to this time of *adventus*--- longing for the coming of light into the world, *these scriptures* are apocalyptic--- in other words, they concern themselves with “the ultimate divine purpose of God”--- the “end times,”--- when God unites heaven and earth in its fullest measure. Wouldn't we rather just concentrate on the baby born of a virgin, lying in swaddling cloth, with people gathering around to adore Him? The coming of the baby Jesus is *really* what we are expecting! ***There's just one thing.*** The Baby Jesus who has come, went on to reverse the effects of sin and death for us, and in ascending to heaven, promised us He would come back again, so that He could take us to Himself, so that we may be where He is. As we enter into this time of *Adventus* today, we recall not only that God has become flesh for our sake, but that Jesus Christ, the One who took flesh, is coming again. Both “comings” are done in great love.

The *second coming* of Christ continues in its importance for humanity.

In the first reading from this past Friday's weekday Mass, we heard an excerpt from the OT Book of Daniel. Daniel, an industrious young Israelite working in the court of King Neb.... during the Babylonian occupation of Palestine, interpreted a dream for the King which entailed a statue made of various metals. The metals represented different earthly empires, of which Babylon was one made of gold.

Daniel then says this about the dream: *“While [the King] looked at the statue, a stone which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it, struck its iron and tile feet, breaking them in pieces. The iron, tile, bronze, silver, and gold all crumbled at once, fine as the chaff on the threshing floor in summer, and the wind blew them away without leaving a trace. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”*

He went on to say, about the rock that shattered the statue:

“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people; rather, it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them, and it shall stand forever.”

Daniel, in interpreting the King's dream, gives the Nation of Israel hope. They have been overpowered by a foreign people, and Daniel tells them that these earthly kingdoms will not last, but only the one that *will last* will be established by divine sources--represented in the rock, the rock that then grows into a strong mountain.

The Israelites, under Babylonian control, long for the awaited Messiah, who will usher in this kingdom. We, as Christians, proclaim Christ as the Messiah, who *has* ushered in this divine kingdom, but we understand that it is not yet in its fullest measure. That will be when Christ comes again. For that time, Christ tells us in so many ways in the Gospels,

to “be prepared”---
live in a state of readiness,
because only the heavenly Father knows
when the time will come to pass.
From a state of preparedness,
there is nothing to fear in Christ’s second coming,
but only joy at his return.

From the beginning of creation,
God has loved us and never abandoned us.
When we see the light building each week

on the Advent wreath,
in addition to the anticipation
of the Baby Jesus being born
into the world for our redemption,
we can also anticipate the time
when Jesus will come again,
and *wreath* us---
envelop us---
in the glory of the fulfillment
of the eternal Kingdom of God.