

**Father Brad Neely**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Advent, Cycle A**  
**Spps / Nezpence: Dec 12, 2010**  
**Is 35: 1-6a, 10; James 5: 7-10; Mt 11: 2-11**

I've wondered at times  
how steeped the Jewish people were  
into their Scriptures at the time of Christ.  
I'm not so sure what to assume,  
and thus far, I haven't come across  
any educated guesses.  
So, for me at least,  
a question looms about percentages  
of those *really* connected with their faith,  
and those *nominally* so.

The reason for understanding  
the Jewish immersion into their own scripture  
becomes fascinating during Advent,  
because we are so attentive  
to what was foretold in the Old Testament  
about the Messiah,  
and Who, *then*, is born  
from the womb of the Virgin Mary.

In the Gospel today,  
Jesus answers the question  
posed by disciples of John the Baptist,  
"Are you the one who is to come,  
or should we look for another?"  
Jesus didn't reply with,  
"Yes, its me---I am *so cool!*"  
Rather, he made a reference  
to the prophet Isaiah.  
Approximately 7 centuries earlier,  
Isaiah made this prophecy---  
one of many---  
to the nation of Israel:  
"[Your] *God comes to save you.*  
[The] *eyes of the blind [are] opened;*  
*the ears of the deaf [are] cleared;*  
*the lame [will] leap like a stag,*  
*and the tongue of the mute will sing.*"

Jesus responds to the disciple,  
"Go and tell John what you hear and see:  
*the blind regain their sight,*  
*the lame walk,*  
*lepers are cleansed,"*  
*the deaf hear,*  
. . . . .and Jesus adds: . . . .  
"the *dead are raised,*

*and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.*  
*And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."*

We don't want to miss this:  
Jesus **adds** "*the dead are raised . . . .*"  
Isaiah's prophecy didn't use those exact words,  
however he did include:  
"Your God comes to *SAVE* you."

I've mentioned before  
that the nation of Israel  
wasn't necessarily expecting that the Messiah  
would be *divine*.  
Yet--curing crippling conditions  
*does lend* itself to something beyond this earth.  
But raising the dead?  
That clinches it.

Again, I believe the *saving* that Isaiah foretells  
is meant to go beyond physical healings---  
and points to something much larger.  
It points to divine intervention in the world.  
It points to God made flesh.  
The expected Messiah---  
[*Messiah--Hebrew for "anointed one,"*]  
and a child born with the name Jesus,  
[*Jesus--Hebrew for, "God saves,"*]  
is the One for Whom they have waited.  
The Old Testament scriptures  
***FIT***  
with what is emerging  
as the New Testament---the New Covenant.

Earlier this week the church celebrated  
the Feast Day of St. Ambrose of Milan---  
the bishop of Milan in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century.  
He became known for his astute administration abilities,  
and profound writings.  
We also remember him as the one who baptized St.  
Augustine.  
In his time, almost 400 years after Christ,  
his writings carried forward  
the prophecy of Isaiah  
and the fulfillment of Jesus as Messiah.  
In one of his many writings, he stated:  
". . . .we have everything in Christ.  
Let every soul go to him,  
whether it be sick from the sins of the body,  
or pierced with the nails. . . .  
. . . .*everything* is within Christ's power,  
and Christ is everything to us.  
If you wish to be healed of your wound,

*He is the healer;*  
if you burn with fevers,  
*He is the fountain;*  
if you are laden with iniquity,  
*He is justice;*  
if you have need of help,  
*He is strength;*  
if you fear death,  
*He is life;*  
if you desire heaven,  
*He is the way to it;*  
if you flee from darkness,  
*He is the light;*  
if you seek food,  
*He is nourishment.*" (On Virginity, ix).

And we could flesh out the mention of heaven  
in St. Ambrose's list,  
to something like:  
"if you wish to be saved and enjoy eternal divine life,  
*He (Christ) is your **Savior.***"

During this time of Advent,  
we endeavor to anticipate the Messiah's birth  
as if we were the nation of Israel 2000 years ago.  
Remember that in the Jewish scriptures---  
---which we have also adopted---  
[the scriptures including the prophecies of Isaiah]---  
that the God of Israel was revealed to Moses as, "**I am.**"  
"**I am**" was later and further manifested  
in the flesh in Christ Jesus, the Messiah,  
who was foretold by Isaiah to save.  
The reality of our own existence  
is that **God—I am** created us,  
and as such, "we exist—we are."  
Another reality is that we will exist forever.  
The **saving** grace of the One  
foretold by Isaiah 2700 years ago  
is given for the world to embrace----  
to everyone who desires to exist forever  
in the divine realm with "**I am.**"