

December 2019

“A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isaiah 40:3

The prophet tells of the “coming” of the Lord when He will break into human history to rescue His people from sin and death. Now we look forward once again to His return when He will appear in human history to usher in life everlasting!

The church year begins anew in December with Advent and culminates with the church well into the middle of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” as we move into 2020. Advent, which means “coming”, is a penitential season tempered with “holy joy” that teaches us about the “four comings” within the season: the prophecy of Christ’s birth, the incarnation of Christ at His birth, the sacramental coming of Christ in His Word and Sacraments, and the return of Christ at the end of the world when He comes in glory!

While Advent is a season of repentance and preparation, it also has an increasing element of joy as the season advances each week anticipating the joy of Christ and His Incarnation in Bethlehem. As Advent continues, there is an overwhelming sense of joy in knowing the promises of God in Christ have been delivered and the church anxiously awaits celebrating God’s promises delivered in the birth of Christ once again.

Looking over the “four seasons” within Advent, we learn from the prophecy of Scripture that a Savior would come to earth **Genesis 3:15** to “seek and save the lost” as stated in **St. Luke 19:10**. God certainly keeps His promises in Christ, delivering His Son to be our Savior. During Advent, we pray for renewal and strengthened faith remembering that God is faithful and desires our salvation through the work of Christ the Savior.

As we move further into Advent, the days of penitence slowly give way to celebrating the birth of our Savior beginning December 24th and continuing through January 6th, the Epiphany of Our Lord. Even during this season of penitence, we anticipate celebrating Christ’s first

coming, His birth to the Virgin Mary that the work of salvation would be completed on the cross.

The season of Advent also leads us to Christ bringing us to repentance and faith. Our Lord comes to us giving strength and peace in the Means of Grace, His Sacraments, bestowing the chief blessing of forgiveness of sins and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation. What a joy to gather for the Divine Service and receive the gifts Christ has won for us on the cross and give God praise and thanksgiving for His grace given in Christ, our Savior.

Finally, Advent also calls us to remember Christ will come again as the victorious Savior and King who desires the faithful to be with Him in eternity. Indeed, God’s desire is salvation for all, which He offers freely through the work of Redemption Christ secured on the cross. God’s plan of salvation was in place from before the foundation of the world and He has never wavered in His faithfulness to His Word and the promises given there.

Even though this is a season of penitence, Advent also leads us to a holy joy knowing that our Savior has come and has died for our sins and risen again, that we have forgiveness, life and salvation. God has kept His promise of a Savior by sending Christ to redeem us from sin, death and the devil forever. Therefore, we can say Advent is an annual gift as we begin the new church year, leading us to the celebration of Christmas, God’s promises given in Christ!

**Ye sons of men, oh, hearken: Your heart and mind prepare;
To hail the Almighty Savior, O sinners, be your care.
He who of grace alone Our life and Light was given,
The promised Lord from heaven, Unto our world is shown.**

TLH 75 “Ye Sons of Men, Oh, Hearken” stanza 1

My family and I pray for God’s Blessings to all of you in Christ our Savior who has come and will come again in glory!

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt