

Advent 1

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December 1, 2002

>Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Isaiah 64:1-9

{1} O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence-- {2} as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! {3} When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. {4} From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. {5} You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. {6} We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. {7} There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. {8} Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. {9} Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Yahweh has hidden his face from Israel because of their sin. Because the people are shamed Yahweh, himself, is disregarded. The prophet begs him not to remember their sin forever, but to display his awesome power. Then their adversaries would know the power of the God of Israel. While the mighty deeds of Yahweh are not apocalyptic events, they are demonstrations of the power of the God of Israel and demonstrations of this authority over the creation.

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

{1} Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth {2} before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! {3} Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. {4} O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? {5} You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. {6} You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. {7} Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved....{16} They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance. {17} But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. {18} Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

The Psalm takes up the themes of Isaiah, praying for the salvation and restoration of Israel, and the destruction of her enemies.

2. *Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh*: The central northern Israelite tribes are in great distress and turmoil. No specific event can be documented.

3, 7: A refrain that is also repeated in verse 19, which is omitted from the reading. The refrain prays for God's face to shine, as in the Aaronic benediction (Numbers 6:25; and frequently in the Psalms, e.g. Psalm 46; 67:1, etc.). This is a metaphor for God's favorable attention to the activities and needs of his people. Specifically, the prayer is for restoration (from exile) and salvation.

16. *They have burned it with fire:* "It" is the vine that Yahweh brought out of Egypt and planted in the land (verses 8 and 14).

17. *the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself:* "the one at your right hand" is literally "the son of man." This is not a reference to the "son of man" of Daniel, but rather to the king whom Yahweh will strengthen so the nations may again respect Israel.

18. "C. Westermann calls attention to the fact that v. 18 shows 'a remarkable likeness to the promise of the people at the convocation at Schechem in Josh. 24:16-18'." ¹

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

{3} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. {4} I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, {5} for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind-- {6} just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you-- {7} so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. {8} He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. {9} God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The restoration and salvation urgently prayed for in the first lesson and Psalm has begun, God's people have already been enriched so they are not lacking in any spiritual gift, in order that they may be blameless on the day of Jesus Christ.

Mark 13:24-37

{24} "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, {25} and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. {26} Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. {27} 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. {28} "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. {29} So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. {30} Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. {31} Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. {32} "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. {33} Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. {34} It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. {35} Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, {36} or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. {37} And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Mark's "Little Apocalypse" in chapter 13 is generally seen as a composite of eschatological sayings of Jesus and early Christian prophets, together with Marcan additions. The chapter is arranged as a response to the question of the disciples in verse 4: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?"

24-25. *in those days, after that suffering:* The sufferings recounted in the first part of the chapter included the destruction of the Temple including the abomination of desolation, wars, earthquakes, famines, the persecution of Christians, deceivers, false prophets and false Christs.

the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken: The cosmic imagery includes eclipses of the sun and moon and meteorites. The people of that period knew what kinds of heavenly events occurred naturally, so these events would have been outside the ordinary, and would have reflected the dissolution of the created order.

26-27. *the Son of Man...the angels:* The passage is based on Daniel 7:13, but while the figure in Daniel is a symbolic figure, in Mark he is a divine person with authority to gather the elect, that is the faithful believers.

28-32: One should recognize that the events recounted indicate that the time of the end

is near. Nevertheless, no one knows the time of the end except the Father. Although this generation, "this generation" will pass away, but Jesus' words are eternal.

33-37: An exhortation and a parable urging the faithful to keep awake, to be prepared for the end and the return of Jesus.

Reflection

Advent is a difficult season for a worship leader or pastor. Every year commercial preparations for Christmas begin earlier which encourages people to concentrate on the sentimental qualities of that festival and ignore the sterner discipline of Advent. Advent is the season of preparation and expectation for the coming of Christ. It encourages us to examine our lives, to reflect on our need for God to enter our lives and to earnestly prepare for and eagerly await to coming of Christ, in the celebration of the Incarnation, in Christ's continual coming in our daily living and in the final coming of our Lord in judgement and the renewal of the Father's creation.

No matter how much we must accommodate our congregations' insistence on Christmas carols and other anticipations before Christmas we need to keep our attention on the proper concerns of the season of Advent.

The first lesson turns our attention to confession, repentance and divine restoration. The Psalm also prays for restoration. The second lesson sees the restoration of the faithful beginning in Christ and fulfilled in the revealing of Jesus Christ on the day of the Lord. Finally, using some of the images of apocalyptic, the Gospel urges the elect to be alert for the return of Christ for no one except the Father knows the day or the hour of the Lord's return.

Hymns ²

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), Hymnal Supplement 1991 (e.g. 725s) and LBW (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, II=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

31 --E--Wake, Awake, for
25 --D--Rejoice, Rejoice
32 --D--Fling Wide the
312 --I--Once He Came

627v --I--My Lord, What
361 --P--Do Not Despair
630v --G--Light One Candle
23, 443, 725s, 34, 394

Prayers of the People ³

A: Christ comes at the right time to make full our joy. That we may be prepared for his coming, we pray "Lord, in your mercy" and respond, C: Hear our prayer.

A: For the Church, yet unwed to the grandness of kingdom purpose, we ask that it may awake and be born to new wonder. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

A: For first ministers of state and for our own premier _____, that with enlightened decisions they may become instruments of righteousness in the land. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

A: For those who long for a cheerful heart within and adequate provision without. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

A: For those who mourn the death of a loved one, for singles and those who form new families, and for all children and learning ones, that heaven in love come down. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

A: For those who would know life in Christ and receive baptism, that Advent be a rich preparation. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

A: For those who come to the High Table of Holy Communion, that doubt fall away and pardon be assured. Lord, in your mercy. C: Hear our prayer.

P: The season abounds with the prospect of a grand return. The brightness of the Coming One offers no shadows. All hail! C: Amen.

Or ⁴

Presider or deacon

As we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us offer prayers to God who stirs up strength and comes to help us.

Deacon or other leader

For the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory. For the coming of Wisdom to teach and guide us. For the coming of Emmanuel, the hope of all the peoples. For the peace of the world, and for our unity in Christ. For *N* our bishop and all bishops, for the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. For the church throughout the world and the faithful in every place. For the leaders of the nations and all in authority. For justice, peace, and freedom among peoples of the earth. For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, and for those in prison.

For the dying and the dead. For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need. Joining our voices with the blessed Virgin Mary and with all the saints and angels of God, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

O King of all the nations, only joy of every heart, keystone of the mighty arch who makes us one, come and save the creature you fashioned from clay. Glory to you for ever.

Notes

¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 143.

² <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0203.txt>

³ http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_b1.txt. These prayers were composed for Year B three years ago, so it will be important to scan them for references to contemporary events which may not be appropriate now.

⁴ <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>