

November 30, 2020
The 1st Sunday of Advent

Come Down!

Happy New Year! You might think, 'you're off your rocker pastor Matt! Your age has finally caught up to you.' We think of new year is January 1st, but for the Church, the New Year begins with the first Sunday in Advent and that is where we are today, the first Sunday of Advent. Let's just go into a quick little history lesson on Advent. First of all, the word advent itself, what does it mean? Well it means to arrive or to come in to being. It was commonly used for when a king went through his coronation; or when a king entered town; or was going to enter into a town. It was the advent of the king, the coming of a new age, or a new beginning, the arrival. But we also look at it when we see in the dictionary that advent is a period beginning four Sundays before Christmas; and observed by some Christians as a season of fasting and prayer. It is a time or a season to, well this won't sound right, but it's a time to hurry up and slow down.

Let's focus on the slow down and tie it back to the dictionary term. It's a time to slow down, a time to fast, and pray. Why? Because we are to reflect on a number of things. The purpose of that reflection is number one; as you heard in the children's message, to prepare. To prepare for the greatest message ever; that God sent His Son to redeem mankind. How do we prepare? That takes us to the second week of advent. A week that focuses on the prophets and two aspects of the prophets; one the call from the prophets to repent; to again confess sins and to turn away from the sins. But it's also a time to look at the prophets and the prophecies they made concerning the Messiah and how they were going to be fulfilled; or how they have been fulfilled. Third, it's time to slow down. Fast and pray and reflect on joy. Joy that comes because we know that even though our sins be as scarlet; because of Christ, our robes have been washed and made white as snow. That's why if you have an advent candle, the third candle is pink. It's that red, our sins being scarlet and us becoming white as snow. Put together and you get pink. Fourthly, it is a time anticipation. Anticipation because what has been waited for so long is imminent, the coming of the King of kings. that's why the other three candles are purple. It shows royalty. It's why I wear purple right now. Royalty, it's a

time to celebrate that Jesus did come. And so, we look forward with great anticipation to that Christmas message, that unto us a child is born.

And yet, while we slow down, parents look at the prophecies and we consider the joy we have, and we eagerly anticipate Christmas. It's also a time of hurry up. Not us, but the Lord. It's our call to Him hurry up Lord, come! And that's exactly where the Prophet Isaiah was when he wrote chapter 64. A little background on Isaiah. He was the son of Amos. Jewish tradition says that Amos was the brother of King Amaziah. So, Isaiah was a part of the Royal family. Unfortunately, his brother Amaziah was a rotten king. And so here is Isaiah, a prophet from the Royal family and one of his big problems is his brother. What else do we know about him? As we read through the book of Isaiah, it's very obvious, he was a married man. He was a father. He resided in Jerusalem.

We also see when we look at 2nd Kings, that he experienced the fall of Israel; that is the 10 northern tribes to the Assyrians. We see that King Hezekiah called on Isaiah and it was Isaiah who told Hezekiah not to worry about the Assyrian army when it came and surrounded Jerusalem; because the Lord would fight for him. The Lord send an Angel, that Angel took out 185,000 of those Assyrian soldiers and they quickly retreated from Jerusalem.

Hezekiah became sick, thought he was going to die, and indeed he was. He called on Isaiah who prayed for him and Isaiah who announced to him that the Lord was going to give him more years. Hezekiah felt so bad, he was certain he was going to die. He asked Isaiah for sign. Do you know what the sign was? God would make the sun go backwards in the sky. And that's exactly what happened. Hezekiah was given 15 more years.

This Isaiah was given a vision by God. That's what the book is about. It is about the vision that God gave Isaiah. He took that vision from God and he boldly spoke the truth. He knew Israel had fallen away from the Lord and as a result had fallen to the invaders. He knew Judah was falling away from the Lord and according to the vision Judah would also fall to the Babylonian empire. He called on Hezekiah's son Manasseh, who was a rotten king to repent, to turn back turn back to the Lord, change. When we look at the big book of Hebrews, we see that Manasseh's response was to kill Isaiah have him sawn in two which was kind of what happened to all the prophets. They suffered for speaking the truth. And so, Isaiah has this vision. He speaks the

truth. Israel has fallen, Judah you're going to fall; but yet, God will bring a Redeemer and God will redeem you.

Then we get to chapter 64. It's the closing part of Isaiah. He knows God's judgment, he knows what's coming, and this is why he writes; "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down." Now why would he want the sky to roll back and God to come down? Notice what Isaiah says; "to make Your name known to your adversaries." We hear that often times today, that people would say, 'well why doesn't God just do a miracle? That's what Isaiah is saying, 'Lord come down and show the people that you are God.' He continues, 'that the nation might tremble at Your presence.' Certainly Lord, if you roll the sky back, you come down, they'll repent. He makes the point, that's still valid today. Consider this; 'no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. Boy, I want you to ponder that verse right there. There are so many religions out there, as so often we hear oh, we all worship the same God. Balderdash! Isaiah nails it. No eye has seen a God besides the God of the Bible who acts in this world for His people. You look at any other religion and they have no evidence of their God doing diddly squat. The God of the Bible, that evidence is all over the place. But what is the problem? Three simple words. We have sinned.

And the response? How does he respond after he acknowledges we have sinned? He begins by praising God; because he knows only God can make a difference. So, he says, "But now, oh Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you're the Potter." It just it puts it into perspective. We're here, we are nothing compared to God. He is the one who can squash, He's the one who can mold. We are all the work of Your hands." When you really think about it, stopping and praising God and acknowledging that He is God, and we are not. It is the first step in humble. What does again, scripture tell us about humble, humbling? "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up."

So, following on the heels of that praise, following on the heels of humbling, he makes a request. Be not so terribly angry, oh Lord, and remember not our iniquity or our sin forever." In other words, please forgive us. Behold, look we are your people. Again, it is an acknowledgement that it is God who created them; and it is God who had called them; and it is God that had done everything for him. Again, we must remember this is chapter 64. They've already heard Chapter 9, "For unto us a Son is born, unto us Child is

given. And the government will rest upon His shoulders. His Name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace.” They're looking forward to this! And Isaiah is saying, Oh Lord when the heavens come down.

So, this is what advent is about. It's about preparing to see the request of the people and the prophecies that have been given throughout the entire Old Testament going all the way back to Genesis about the coming Messiah. It's preparing to see it all fulfilled. We prepare by repenting first. Confessing, as Isaiah did, we're sinners. We need the Savior. Hurry up and come! We are sinners, forgive us, empower us by Your Spirit to change.

We prepare to celebrate Christmas. God's answer in Bethlehem. But we take it a step further, at least we really believe, we do. We do something that we so often don't see happening in this day and age. We look back at history, and we learn we learn from Isaiah, we learn from Israel, the 10 northern tribes. We learn from Judah. Because like the 12 tribes of Israel together; we have turned away from God and from his word. As a country, as a state, as a county, as a city, as a people, and all too often under the guise of the name Christian Church.

We prepare because of what Jesus has said. We see it in Mark chapter 13; as well as Matthew chapters 24 and 25; times are going to become challenging. Disaster, judgment is on its way. But He is coming back. He is going to come down. Just as Isaiah says, “Oh that You would rend the heavens and come down.” In the Book of Revelation, we're given a single word for that concept of coming down. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus. ‘Oh Lord, rend the heavens, come down, and take us home to be your children. But until then, ‘Oh Lord help us to prepare, prepare for the greatest thing that has ever happened, when You came down in Your Son Jesus Christ. May we look at ourselves and see that we are the reason for the season. We have sinned and fallen short, but you have taken care of it by sending your Son. And so we anxiously await as we say hurry up, Christmas, come here! We also slow down and prepare.

In our Saviors Name, Amen.