

Sermon for December 3, 2017 – “Hope Come Down”

1st Sunday of Advent, Year B – Texts: Isaiah 64:1-9; Mark 13:32-37

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The prophet Isaiah words seem especially appropriate these days...**“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down...That the mountains would tremble before you! “Come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you.”** And the reason why is because it seems that every time you turn around something completely awful is happening! A shooting here, a natural disaster there, and so on. We may often find ourselves wondering: “where is God?” We wouldn’t be there first to do so. It was during the Exile, possibly the lowest point in the history of the nation of Israel, when we hear through the prophet Isaiah the people’s cry: **“Why O Lord, do you make us wander from your ways...“And harden our hearts so we do not revere you? “Return for the sake of your servants...“The tribes that are your inheritance.”** This cry perhaps captures the essence of Advent best.

Advent is about waiting. It’s about wondering. And yes, it’s about fear. It’s about the fear that the way will be lost; that **all** will be lost. But in that fear Advent is also about **hope**. Hope for the return of the Lord. Hope for the day when He will again bring peace into our violence. His love into our madness. His joy into our sorrow. Hope for the time of the kingdom in all of its richness, all its fullness, all its beauty. **“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down...“That the mountains would tremble before you! “Come down to make your name known to your enemies...“And cause the nations to quake before you.”** Oh yes, Advent is about hope. Hope that the wrongs of this world will be righted. Hope that the evil of this world will perish. Hope that justice will be done. But, even more, Advent is also about **personal** things. It addresses our deepest needs, our deepest worries. **“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.”**

We sit here today; a people who are waiting and we sometimes fear that God has forgotten us. It certainly seems that way sometimes doesn’t it? Hope’s in short supply these days. We sometimes fear that the time of peace will never come. Fear seems to be a constant companion. Jesus knew of this fear and talked to His disciples about the end times. A time when the temple would be destroyed and the land ravaged. A time when there would be wars and rumors of wars. A time when a brother would betray his brother and a father his child. A time when the people would be uncertain and afraid. A time when evil would be loose on the land. We don’t always understand why Jesus talked about these things. Are you like me in wishing that He would have said **more**? That He’d have gone into more detail? I mean, He could have at least told us when all this would happen? I mean, if He had we’d be sure to be ready. We wouldn’t need to get so worked up when we hear of the horrors that occur almost daily. We wouldn’t need to be so shocked. We wouldn’t seek to know more so that we can talk about it and try to understand it trying, often to no avail, to figure out why they happen. We cry out for help, for some sort of explanation to help us understand, for some clue when this will all end! On some level we know that eventually, Jesus will return. We know that God has a plan. We know that He’s in complete control. We know that somehow, some way, he always has been. But why? **Why?!?!?!?** Why this way of fear? Why do we not see you yet coming in glory? Why this way and not another? What did Jesus really want us to do when He said **“No one knows about that day and hour...“Not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son...“But only the Father. “Be on guard! Be alert! “You do not know when that time will come.”** Did Jesus say this to simply remind us to wait? To long for Him? To want to see His face? To watch for Him? Is **that** it? Is that the **only** purpose of everything that’s going on around us? To have us to either get excited or fearful? To wait in longing for something easier and better? Or is there more?

Is it perhaps like when we were young? You know, the times when we'd mess up our bedrooms, clothes, toys strewn everywhere, and mom would say, "I'm going next door for a minute. "When I come back I want everything tidied up!" And then they'd leave and come back a little later and quietly peek into the room to see that it still looked as if a bomb had gone off or that we were fighting with a sibling. Is it like those times when they'd then crept away to give us another chance to get the room cleaned up? Is it like the times when they'd then shut the front door a little harder when they returned or make a loud noise in the kitchen and then hear sudden noises of bustle as we hurried to get the room straightened up with one of us calling out "just a minute?"

Is this time about **more** just than waiting? More than just fear? More than longing for what has not yet happened? Or is this time also a mercy? A time for sparing us judgment? A time for allowing us to get it right? A time for us to grow **spiritually** in trust and in obedience? Is this why Jesus said **"Be on guard! Be alert!"** Is this why Jesus said **"It is like a man going away. He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge each with his assigned task and tells the one at the door to keep watch?"** Is this why Jesus said **"Keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back...Whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. "What I say to you, I say to everyone, watch!"** This God's house. We are His servants. We are His children. Our brother Jesus died for us, rose, then ascended to heaven. But, He promised He would come again. And so, we wait, for better or worse...it's what we're to do! O that He **would** come, now! That the Word of God would at last break Heaven's silence. That He would come down and say, "enough!" That He would, at last, take His place on the throne of our world. That He would make everything all right again, that things would be as they were intended to be!

And so, we ask for help. Help to keep Him on the throne of hearts right now, to prepare Him room to do the job He's called us to do. Help to be loving and caring, help to be the people You call us to be, help to remain hopeful, help to remember that **"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."** We have been given every spiritual gift. We **can** wait. We **can** keep the faith as long as necessary. We **can** remain hopeful and we **know** that He will be with us to the end so that we will be blameless on that day. **Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down...That the mountains would tremble before You! Come down to make Your name known to Your enemies and cause the nations to quake before You.**

Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen and amen.