

First Sunday of Advent – Cycle C

November 29, 2009

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We want to welcome back our holy deacon, soon to be ordained priest, God willing. Today we hear the word of God and it fits into our theme that while we developed a theme around the readings of course, for the Advent Season, it is promises made, promises kept. If you go to the very First Reading today God says, "I will fulfill the promise that I made to the house of the Israel. I will fulfill the promise." So what is the promises that He has given us? The first promise of course that God promises us is salvation. That we shall be saved and there are many more but the second one we are going to focus on as He promises us eternal life. But let us first focus on the promise that we shall be saved. The greatest thing I think when it comes to needing Christ is that we come to acknowledge how much I need Christ. And the problem has been is that difference between the Church of today and the Church of say fifty years ago is fifty years ago everybody knew how much they needed a savior because it was drilled into you by the nuns. You need a savior. You need a savior. Anyone who went to Catholic school knows that and experienced that. I remember it quite well with the Divine Providence nuns who had me. I loved those nuns and they instilled in us how much we need Jesus. But the problem has been throughout these last years are everybody says you know God loves you as you are and it is okay. Everything is fine. So if God loves us as we are, and everything is okay and is fine, we don't need saved from anything. Because I am fine just the way I am. That is a lie. Each of us needs to be saved. And God promises us that He will save us. Until we get into this reality, it's like you are in the middle of the ocean, you are taking a cruise. The ship is going down. The pirates came and blow a hole in your side. There are thousands of you going over and the ship is going down like the Titanic. You are one of the lucky ones. You happen to grab a hold of something but it is cold and you are freezing and you are getting hypothermia. Ready to go under for the last time, you are about to die. Somebody jumps in while the Coast Guard is there, jumps in starts to grab you and then you grab him and he says, "Hold on." And you hold onto him for dear life. That is what it is to be saved.

In yourself you are going to die. When you embrace Christ you live forever. The reality is most people think I am doing fine. I am kind of swimming here. I am doing fine. We are not. Each of us needs salvation. Each of us has all of these things we need saved from. Our fears - how many people walk around in fear and anxiety, about what is going to happen today, what is going to happen tomorrow, am I going to have enough money, we all need saved from our fears. About what happens the day I die. What is going to happen? Is it over? Is it just beginning? What happens because life on earth is short. What happens? What happens because the deepest need in all of us is to be loved. Will there be someone who loves me? Someone who challenges me to be the best. Again someone who loves you just doesn't meet you where you are. As I have said before someone who loves you the way you are go down to Mc Donald's and get in the drive thru lane. That person in there loves you just the way you are. They don't care anything about you as long as you give them the money for your coffee. They accept you just the way you are. You can be sitting in that car in your underwear. They will accept you just the way you are, some of you more, some of you less. The reality is that they will accept you. If that is what it is, that is not what God is calling us to. He is giving us this love that calls us to be more. That calls us onto the eternal life He wants to give us. It is His promise that He will save us. And He fulfills that promise in Jesus Christ as we focus on what Advent is about. It is the fulfillment of our salvation in

Christ. How God the Father looks at you and me and says, "I can't live without you. I will give you my Son to save you." And then what He gives us with that gift is the gift of eternal life.

These are the promises that God gives to us but we need to respond. Isn't it amazing if you listen to the Gospel today, I love the Gospel because we begin the Year C today, and He says okay if the world starts to end and all that stuff we talked about a couple of weeks ago in 2012, if the world goes down, you are excited, right? Yes Father we are ecstatic. We pray for the world to end in 2012. We hope it comes in 2009 and about a day. But anyway this is what happens. He said all of these things are going to happen. "There will be signs of the sun perplexing by roaring of the seas and the waves. People will die by fright." You don't think you need saved? You will then. People die of fright in anticipation of the world coming to an end. "And the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then you will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud of power and great glory." When these things begin to happen what does He say? "Stand erect with your head held high. Why? Because if you know the Savior when these things happen you are ecstatic. You are not running away out of fear. You can handle whatever the world sends your way. It's okay because you know Who is coming. Whether He comes today. Whether He comes in 2012. Whether He comes the day you die, the world just ended the day you dropped dead. You can be afraid and you can run or you can stand there with your head erect knowing Who is coming for you. The only way to do this, the only way to live this life in no fear is to be in relationship with this God. Is to spend time with Him every day, is to know Him as you know everybody else. It is the most important thing.

Last night what we did in this church is we had a 60th Wedding Anniversary. It was a glorious thing to start this promises made, promises kept. Here is this couple, 60 years. I wasn't even thought of yet. My mother when these two got married, my mother was nine. No, she was seven when these two got married. So here are these two in spite of everything kept their promises to each other. So it must be with us. God has made you a great promise. He gives you everything. You today and I today must give Him a response. We have to say yes to this God of the universe. We have to say yes to this God who loves us and gave His life for us because in the end He is the only thing that matters. You have no idea when Jesus will come into the church holding a flag going up and down. You have got to be ready to meet Him however He comes to you. That you and I when we are in this relationship, when we surrender our hearts and our lives to him, and we say Jesus, You have given your life to me so Jesus I want to live my life for You. So that when the day comes, when You do come when there is tribulation it will be okay because I know who is coming because I am in a relationship with the God of love. Just like it cost Him everything to love you what must it cost you to love Him, everything.

So again people of God as we begin this new Church year is that the way you love Jesus, is that the way you want to love Jesus? Is Jesus something you just do once a week so you don't go to hell when you die or is Jesus the reason you do everything? Soon you will see the big signs that say Jesus is the Reason for the Season. That's nice. Jesus isn't just the reason for the season, Jesus is the reason you and I are alive at all. Jesus is the reason for everything in your life. So is that real in your life. Have you fully surrendered yourself? Is there anything in your life you have not surrendered? Then this day, the beginning of the Church year is the day to do it. Today before you leave today you say, Lord, you have given me the promise of yourself, Lord I want to respond with the gift of myself to hold nothing back. To give everything for love of you who gave everything for love of me. You got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.