

December 9, 2018 – 2nd Sunday of Advent - Cycle C
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Today I, as we listen to the readings, this past week as I was reflecting on Advent and about how much easier it is for me to do my morning tweets and the various things that I put out, it's because Advent is a time of hope. That's all it is. It's a lot of hope and I think that it reminds us more than anything is that we need to be people of hope. You know, hope is that assurance that the future is in God's hand and that He will take care of us. It's the knowing that. No matter how bad it looks, God's still in charge and everything's gonna be OK. That's what we believe. When you look at the readings, I think the readings can help us to make sure that we're hopeful in three different things: in our country or our countries – wherever people are who are listening to us, in our church and in our personal lives.

So, we go to the gospel and it talks about very much in the context about who is in charge. You know, Herod's there, Pilate's there and all these people are there now and make sure, now people could think now if you're a Christian that this isn't good – look who happens to be in charge right now and they don't like us and yet in the midst of that, the prophet speaks hope. Right? He's speaking salvation. In the midst of all the stuff out there that we're not very happy with were the Jews. Speak hope into it. Now we gotta do something to get that hope and now I'm gonna talk about that with our repentance. But we still need to be people and everybody else is cursing and everybody else is bemoaning how bad it is and everybody else is seeing all the garbage. We must be the people that speak hope. That's who we are. If we're not people of hope than being here has not purpose, right? Because hope, the reason we're here is that after we're dead, God's gonna give us eternal life. Is that hope? Yes! We need to be people that bring that hope into our everyday lives so, it doesn't really matter who happens to be in charge of the country, no matter when, God is still big.

Again, as I've talked to you a thousand times about, in Rome, they were killing us in Rome. Is that true and yet they don't exist anymore – the Roman emperors are gone. The church of Jesus Christ sits on top of that place where they killed us. Hope always wins. It just does.

The second thing, of course, you go to the first reading and the first reading talks about the reality of Israel and how God's gonna lead them with joy. He's gonna lead them and take care of them. In the midst of the darkness that Israel was in, again the prophet Baruch promised and spoke hope to the community. Again, where we are, do we speak hope to our families, to our community, to our church or do we just sit there and join everybody else with how bad things are? That doesn't help. Does it? When everybody, when we focus on what's bad, nothing happens good. But, if sit there and focus on what's good and we focus on hope and then we do things to make hope a reality. That means we gotta be forward thinking and forward looking; not backward thinking and backward looking. There's nothing we can do about the past but boy, there's a lot we can do about the future. So, in the church we gotta be forward thinking and thinking about bringing hope and in the country we gotta be forward thinking and looking forward to bringing forward hope and in our personal lives we gotta be forward thinking and bringing hope.

The way it happens personally, here's what Paul, sometimes Paul wasn't always the nicest of people. I don't know if you ever read any of Paul when he talks about circumcision and knives slipping and all that kind of stuff which we won't go into right now. But, here he says, "I pray always with joy. I'm

always filled with joy in every prayer for you.” So, no matter how sinful the community was, he was praying for them with joy. Then he has this one strong sense of hope: “I am confident of this – that the one who began the good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.” You and I gotta remember that God created us for a purpose and when we surrender ourselves to His purpose then God will fulfill His purpose in your life. So, you gotta remember a couple of things.

God’s not done with you yet. That should give you some hope. God’s not done with you yet. He’s not done with me – you should really have hope. The reality is that God’s still working on us and God still has a plan for us and God created us for this plan and for this reality and we need to be hope filled. We can’t be people who just, you know, get down on our sinfulness and down on our weaknesses and down on how bad things are in our own life. We need to bring hope – to let God bring hope to our personal lives that we’re not done yet. God has a plan. We trust that plan. We trust His will in our life – that God loves me more than I love me. He’s gonna make all things OK but you and I gotta do something.

When John the Baptist is coming and proclaiming repentance. You know, some people make John the Baptist an ogre but he was preaching repentance for salvation. He was preaching hope. He said repent of our sins. Don’t let your sins define you. Let God define you. Stop focusing on yourself and your sinfulness. Repent! Get rid of them. Say “no” to them and focus now on God and focus on His salvation. This is what the call for all of us is: not focus on ourselves; not focus on the mess but focus on God and His plan that each of us can have great hope because God’s in charge and He’s love and He will take care of us. That’s what we believe.

So when you’re going crazy throughout any of those things, just say one thing, “Jesus, I hope in You. Jesus, I hope in You. Jesus, I hope in You.” That statement of faith and hope will bring about hope in your own heart. I promise.

May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.