

Advent, Daily Readings – Week 1

Advent 2015 daily reflections

Monday November 30

Scripture Passage: Isaiah 2:1-4

Scripture Verse: They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more Isaiah 2:4

The Remembrance Day services which took place earlier this month are noteworthy for many reasons one of which is the presence of still active uniformed soldiers at the cenotaphs in Eastern Ontario. Most of them are young...some of them may have returned recently from an overseas deployment...others may be waiting to be sent overseas. Many people at the cenotaph are undoubtedly experiencing the absence of relatives or friends who have lost their lives in the wars and conflicts of the 20th and now 21st centuries. How little we seem to have learned since 1914-1918.

Remembrance Day looks back in memory, “lest we forget”. At the same time it looks to the future with prayers and reflections expressing our longing for a world of peace where “nation shall not lift up sword against nation”.

As we await the coming of the Prince of Peace, we are invited each Advent to reflect on Jesus giving of himself for God's Kingdom and the peaceful planet which is God's vision for the world God loves.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to live as people of peace.

Tuesday December 1

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10: 21-24

Scripture Verse: “...you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants” Luke 10:21

Who are these little ones, the “infants” of whom Jesus is speaking. In addition to children, Jesus is speaking about all who are powerless, without great influence and often without a voice. We are reminded by our spiritual tradition that we can learn a great deal from the poor. Jean Vanier (the founder of L'Arche communities around the world) speaks of how those who have what we often label “disabilities” can teach people how to be more fully human. These “little ones” remind us of our own essential vulnerability and our dependence upon God and on one another. They teach us a great deal about love.

During Advent we are invited to make more of an effort to listen to the voices of the most vulnerable among and around us. Through them, we may hear something of Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be more attentive the voices of the “little ones” so that through them we may hear your word for us.

Wednesday December 2

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10, Matthew 15: 29-37

Scripture Verse: “On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food...” Isaiah 25:6

For Isaiah, the feast of rich food is a sign of protection, forgiveness, the coming together of nations, being saved and victory over death. The banquet is provided on a mountain to which all people gather.

Similarly in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus goes up on a mountain and people come to him in great crowds. They are hungry for sight, wholeness, speech and mobility. Jesus crowns the day of healing by feeding them. By multiplying seven loaves we see a sign of God’s intention to provide endlessly for people’s needs.

We are invited by these passages to look around at the abundance in our lives today. We reflect on ways in which we have been fed. We recall times when we needed sustenance physically, spiritually and emotionally. We give thanks for times of protection, healing and forgiveness.

The Jesus we await during this season of Advent comes to show us that God takes care of all we need. As followers of Jesus who have been nourished by our faith in him, how do we provide nourishment for others?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, through your Son Jesus you give us what we need. Help us to approach you with our needs. Guide us, as followers of Jesus, to reach out and meet the needs of others.

Thursday December 3

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6, Matthew 7:21-27

Scripture Verse: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock” Matthew 7:24

Jesus encourages us to let our actions back up their words and show that we are willing to do God’s will. Jesus likens that to building a home on a rock foundation rather than building on sand.

To build your life on a foundation—the foundation of trying to do God’s will—is to build a life on something solid and unchanging. To use the teaching of Jesus as the basis for our lives is to be rock-solid and certain of living in a way that is pleasing to God.

“Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock” (Isaiah 26:4). God is steadfast and firm. God can be counted on and will not move away.

Taken together, these teachings of Isaiah and Jesus are saying that God is the firm foundation in whom we can trust and on whom we can build our lives.

In Advent we reflect on how have the firm convictions upon which we have built our life support us during stressful times? Who are the people in your life who have been the rocks you depend on for reliability and strength?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, your Son Jesus taught those who came to him to build their foundations on rock. Help us to make trying to do your will the rock that supports all that we do.

Friday December 4

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26 Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5-15

Scripture Verse: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9:36

“Harassed and helpless”: is a feeling that we all can experience at times in our busy “2015” lives. Overwork...unemployment, family worries, health concerns—all these things and more can cause us to be stressed and feel things are out of control. During these times we can wish for someone to shepherd us out of our troubles.

The response of Jesus to the struggling and/or the lost is always one of compassion. Even when we feel too overwhelmed to even pray for help, Jesus reaches out compassionately to us.

In today's gospel, Jesus says that “the labourers are few”. Often the way we experience the compassion of God is through the compassion of those who labour for Jesus. Advent invites us to reflect on how we might be instruments of God's compassion for the poor, the discouraged, the lonely, the bereaved...who are around us. How can we respond more generously to the call to be “labourers” for Jesus and thus transform the world into God's Kingdom?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, lead us with the hand of Jesus the Good Shepherd when we are discouraged by life's events. Help us as well to be instruments of your compassion for others.