

Advent 2: December 5/6, 2015

HOPE & Justice

HOPE

Once he came in blessing, all our sins redressing; came in likeness lowly, Son of God most holy; bore the cross to save us; hope and freedom gave us. Hope and freedom are our eager anticipation as we progress through the weeks of December leading up to Christmas. Jesse's righteous Branch comes to judge the needy and promises to give just decisions for the poor of the earth. In that day the wicked will be slain and righteousness will stand as a banner for the peoples. It is a glorious vision and our Advent anticipation.



I like the softened tones and tender images of Christmas as much as the next person. They remind me of my youth when life was simpler and issues were black and white. When the department store windows displayed elaborate Christmas scenes and it always snowed on Christmas Eve. I suspect my memory wears rose colored glasses and we had *issues* back then just like we have them now.

But I don't wear rose colored glasses now. Jeremiah's prophecy to Jerusalem on the brink of



destruction sounds remarkably relevant today. "For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:13-14). Injustice abounds in our world today. It takes *money* to get the ear of a politician. The poor have *less* access to good schools, adequate health care, and equal employment opportunity. In 2011 the 400 wealthiest Americans had more wealth than half of all other Americans combined, some 156 million people. Companies do a corporate inversion overseas to avoid taxation here at home. On a personal level, we've all been touched by injustice. Cars that continue in a merging lane until the last possible moment and then cut into line. Fellow employees who take regular smoke breaks while you soldier through. Your diligence in documenting all tax deductions while having the sinking feeling that many more



come, or should we wait for another?"

Jesus reply: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Luke 7:22) Jesus comes to set things right again. To bring forth justice on earth. The cause of the poor in spirit will not go unheeded. Rather, Jesus calls them "blessed", for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven comes in the person of Jesus, and in him the mercy and justice of God combine. In mercy he heeds the cry for justice by those who mourn, the meek, those who are persecuted because of righteousness. He feeds the hungry, he heals the sick and comforts those who mourn. He preaches the good news that kingdom of heaven has come. Jesus' actions on a personal level signal what he is to accomplish for the world, to "the people who in darkness sat." For Jesus does not deny the cry for justice that sin demands. Rather he embraces it, becoming the very sin that justice cries out against. His response will be his greatest act of mercy. He offers his life *up* as a ransom for many. And from the cross justice rolls *down* in forgiveness and new life. In these are the basis for hope. In Jesus the mercy and justice of God combine.



Silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given; to meek souls who receive him still, the dear Christ enters in. *I will make you to be a light for the Gentiles.* Jesus comes to restore hope to the meek and give satisfaction to their cries for justice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for *Jesus*, for in him they will be satisfied. In him their just cause will be heard. It is sufficient that he knows. His presence this Christmas season is all we need to be satisfied.

A day will come when that which is hidden will be revealed. When justice delayed becomes justice pronounced. When humility gives way to glory and when faith is vindicated in King



Jesus' glorious return.

In that day justice will be his sword and buckler, and all accounts will be settled. "Beloved, never avenge yourselves," says St. Paul, "but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (Romans 12:19) In that day he will proclaim, "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols." Such is our *present* hope. *Then* it will be our very

possession. Then “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”
(Matthew 13:43)



But that is then and this is now. Our prayer here and now is *Let justice roll down*. Make your presence known in my life, O Lord, and your justice in my world. Restore in me hope that comes from your gospel, “to meek souls who receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.” Hear the promise spoken of Jesus that now is spoken of you. “I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you a light for the Gentiles.” (Isaiah 42:6) It is my great joy to hold the hand of my grandsons and to be their papa. In that clasp they are secure and safe. They don’t necessarily know where they are going. But they protected and directed by a love that would withhold nothing from them. God has given *us* no less a promise. He invites us into his embrace. He promises to keep us from all harm. And he gives us a purpose, which is “to shine”. Take my Good News and be a light for the Gentiles. Show forth my glory that many may come to the brightness of *my* shining. Extend my hand to them to feed, to heal, to comfort, and to share the good news. In so doing you will give them a great gift: *Hope*. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. Amen!