

Lessons for Advent Two, Sunday, December 6, 2020

Below are our lessons for Sunday as well as questions for you to ponder before we gather for Coffee Hour. Even though each of you will be discussing **only one** of the questions, my hope is that by providing you with all of the questions our time of sharing will be enhanced.

Old Testament

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
See, the Lord God comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,

and gently lead the mother sheep.

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

1 You have been gracious to your land, O Lord, *
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.
2 You have forgiven the iniquity of your people *
and blotted out all their sins.
8 I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, *
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people
and to those who turn their hearts to him.
9 Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him, *
that his glory may dwell in our land.
10 Mercy and truth have met together; *
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 Truth shall spring up from the earth, *
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
12 The Lord will indeed grant prosperity, *
and our land will yield its increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him, *

and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

The Epistle

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

The Gospel

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Group Discussion Questions for Coffee Hour (12/6)

Today’s gospel lesson is about end time events. Other readings emphasize the importance of learning to trust in God. Please review these questions in preparation for our time together.

Group 1. What should the role of our church be in the midst of so much suffering and disagreement? Do you feel called to help? If so, how?

Group 2. So far our Advent focus has been on Hope and Peace. Do such thoughts sound insensitive and disconnected to you? What should be the focus of the church in this season?

Group 3. Do you believe that the church can be productive at a time when chaos is normal? What do you believe would be helpful or useful to those you love?

Group 4. What causes you the greatest concern? Do you see any reason(s) for hope?

Group 5. Has the gospel of love and grace lost its relevance? So many people, including Christians, seem so pessimistic. What does the church have to offer that others do not?

Group 6. How do you strengthen your faith when all around you seems to be falling apart? When you have come through a hard season, what helped you to persevere?