

TRINITY LAST

Text: Jeremiah 23:5, St. John 6:5

“When they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

From a God that opens His loving arms to us and gathers His people so that none may be lost, I bring your greeting in the name of He who is, He who was and He who is to come. AMEN

In case you have not noticed, summer is over and with it we look forward to another chilly winter and the challenges of shoveling snow, getting to work and living our daily lives bundled in extra sweaters and blankets. It is always at this time of year I like to look toward the seasons of the church to soften the first cold winds of winter. Trinity has drawn to a close, marked by the green vestments and focus on God's divinity and His person in the form of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Signs of Christmas are in the air and have been since Halloween as retailers try to reach out to consumers between higher gas prices and the reality of higher heating bills this year. But the season I look forward to the most is that of Advent, because it marks the beginning of the church year and the renewal of my understanding of the promise by our Lord and Savior of hope and the promise of salvation in His coming to mankind.

Advent is a penitential season, a season of renewal and anticipation. Jeremiah speaks to us this morning in the Epistle by saying that the days are coming when from the line of David, a King will reign and prosper. He shall execute judgment and justice, and Judah shall be saved. He will be called the Lord of Our Righteousness and we shall say that the Lord lives. That is the great joy of the anticipation of the coming of our Lord in the Advent season. Society has boiled down the coming of our Lord to weeks of marathon shopping and a day of family gatherings. Every year we try to remind ourselves of the need to put Christ back into Christmas but we are too often overwhelmed by the demands of the secular expectations of the season.

Our celebration of Christ's birth and His coming to mankind is about the greatest gift we share and that is His promise of salvation to all who believe in Him. In His grace He calls to us and gives us hope that we embrace through our faith. He has been sent to us to offer us eternal life through His dying on the cross and His bearing the burdens of our sin. It seems sad to say that the reason Christ was born on earth was to die but in that dying He absolves all of us of our sins. That is why Advent is a penitential season because in His coming to die for us, we have the chance to renew our commitment to our God and to strengthen our faith through worship, the sacraments of the church, study of scripture and the sharing of our faith with those who do not know Christ or have turned their backs on Him.

Our Lord in one of His first very public miracles feeds the masses who have gathered around Him to see who he is and perhaps view one of the miracles they have heard Him perform. There He takes the five barley loaves and two small fishes and feeds five thousand people. But it was those closest to him who saw the depth of the miracle. His disciples saw close up what He was doing. They knew the small amount of food that the young boy had brought forth and yet this prophet was able to feed a hungry crowd and still have twelve baskets left over.

The Gospel of St. John focuses very heavily on helping us to understand the divinity of Christ. In the beginning of the Gospel our Lord reveals himself to those He has called before He begins His active ministry. Finally, there comes a point where He lays it on the line with His disciples. To those He has fed He explains who He is and why He has come but St. John tells us that many turn from Him and abandon Him because they find His teachings too hard. (John 6:60).

Then He confronts those closest to Him and says “Do you want to leave too?” (John 6:67). Peter quickly replies “Lord to whom we shall go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy one of God” (John 6:68).

You are the one who was promised Peter proclaims. Scripture and the prophets have told us you were coming and here you are. Can you even imagine the joy His disciples must have felt to stand with Christ,

to speak with Him, to be in His presence every day. To seek His guidance, to feel the glow of His love for them. There He was, real and in the flesh. The waiting was over, the messiah had come.

He is coming to us, He is here. In our worship, in our study of scripture in our faith, He is in our lives every day. We feel His presence, we feel the glow of His love for us, we look to our faith and give Him our trust and He gives us hope and the gift of eternal salvation paid for with His death on the cross. That is what we have to look forward to, a time of spiritual renewal during Advent when we turn to Him, focus on all that separates us from Him and look forward to the fulfilling of His promises.

And He will not see any of us lost, unless we choose to turn from Him. "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37). Each and every one of us is of great value to our Father and each of us in our sin, in our failures, in our faults can always turn to Him and receive the love He is willing to pour out on us without hesitation. "When they were filled, he said to His disciples, gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing be lost."

In the season that is upon us, let us focus first on the coming of our Lord and savior. Let us renew ourselves in the promises He has given us through His Holy Word, let us try to set aside all that takes our hearts and minds off Christ and make the celebration of His coming not about a single day but an entire lifetime.

As we ponder the right gift, let us think of Christ in our sharing. The finest thing we can share with those in our lives is our faith in Jesus Christ as our savior and the hope He brings us because of His sacrifice for us on the cross. Share the gift of scripture and not in the handing over of a nicely wrapped package that is placed on a shelf someplace and forgotten. Engage yourselves and others in God's word and let the Holy Spirit come alive in you.

And when someone looks at you and wonders why Christ has become so important in your life. When they ask you why our Lord has become the center of your life when they see you have hope and confidence and faith and total trust in God's caring for you and they ask why, tell them!

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son to die for us. That whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) What greater gift do we have to share?

We pray: "Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of eternal life you have given us through the sacrifice of your beloved son upon the cross. May we open our hearts to all the hope and all the love you have for us. May we let the Holy Spirit shine bright in our lives and may we in all that we do glorify you. In the name of Him who redeemed us, we pray. AMEN