

Advent 1

THE FIRST LESSON Isaiah 64:1-9

(In spite of their sin and unworthiness God's people plea for His coming. They call for His coming because they trust God is their Father and they are His people. vv. 8-9)

1 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! 2 As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! 3 For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

4 Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. **5 You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?** 6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. 7 No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.

8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. **9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.**

THE OPENING CHANCEL DRAMA

(Jonathan, Tim, Tom and Leisa walk out on to a lake in winter clothing with ice fishing gear.)

TIM: Jonathan, I can't believe you brought us out here!

TOM: I've never been ice fishing. But, it's cold.

LEISA: I don't know, I think this is kind of an . . . an adventure!

JONATHAN: Well, each of you were talking about how busy you were, and how you needed to get away. This is getting away isn't it?

Here, this is where I fish. Everybody get out a pole. Let me drill us a few holes. (Noise)

Anyway, I have another reason for bringing you here.

TOM: What's that, Jonathan?

JONATHAN: I need to talk. I really blew it.

TIM: What did you do this time, Jonathan?

JONATHAN: Well, I was late coming home and my wife and I were supposed to go out.

I was rushing to get ready and she said something about me being a little more considerate of her and others with my time. I was frustrated when I got home. I knew I was late, but when she said that I just told her to be quiet. You should have seen the look on her face. She wasn't just angry, she was hurt. Then she started crying. How can you deal with crying? So, I told her if she wanted to go out she could go alone, and I left.

Leisa: O! . . . Anger can get us into trouble.

TOM: Wow. That is trouble.

JONATHAN: I just wish God would come down and make it all right. I wish he would take away some of my busy-ness, help me watch my temper and my mouth.

TOM: O. I've got a bite. Look at this fish. You know we're all stressed these days.

LEISA: Our stress can cause us to hold it in and then blow up. It sounds like that's what you did.

TIM: What's worse is we know we make a mistake, or hurt someone. We make it right, or try to, and the next thing you know we do the same thing again.

TOM: And you want God to rescue you from what **you did yourself** and keep on doing.

JONATHAN: I feel like that Bible reading last Sunday in Isaiah. I read that after my blow up at home, and I memorized it. **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;** I never saw that before. Even *our righteousness* is filthy in God's sight. What hope do we have?

TIM: We do have hope, do you remember the rest of that verse? **8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. . . 9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.** Hey, I've got a bite too. Anyway, Jonathan, in spite of our sin, God is still our loving Father.

TOM: And, Jonathan, God did come down and save us. That's why we'll celebrate Christmas in a few weeks. God came into this world as Jesus to forgive and us from ourselves.

JONATHAN: Maybe I can be the clay and he can mold me just a little more into a person I should be.

LEISA: That's why we celebrate. The light of the world came into dark lives like ours. OOO. Help! This fish is about to take the pole out of my hand.

THE SECOND LESSON 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

(God is coming again. He calls us into fellowship and keeps us strong for that coming of Jesus!)

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way-- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-- 6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

THE CHANCEL DRAMA

(Dick and Dean and Dianne Sitting at a table at Vagabond Blues. A table is set and coffee cups are out. They are sipping on their drinks.)

DEAN: How's your coffee, Dianne.

DIANE: It's a 16 oz. sugar free mocha latte. I love it. (Looking around) They've really fixed this place up.

DICK: Yes, it's good to have a nice place to get away for a moment.

DEAN: Dick, speaking of getting away, did you hear what Jonathan did?

DIANE: I did. He took Tom and Tim and Leisa walking across the woods, to a lake to go ice fishing. He said he was helping them deal with stress.

DICK: I heard.

DEAN: You know, I've been struggling lately. I'm falling farther and farther behind. It seems "the harder I work the

DIANE: The behinder I get." Me too.

DICK: I wonder if this isn't more than just a time crunch. I think our priorities are out of whack.

DEAN: We're all trying to do too much. You know, my faith suffers when I get overwhelmed.

DIANE: Why should we ever be overwhelmed if God is there to help us? But I feel that way a lot too!

DICK: Maybe we're relying on ourselves, rather than God. I know in my heart I trust Him more than I trust myself. But, I probably spend more time actually relying on myself than on Him.

DEAN: Do you guys have time for prayer anymore?

DIANE: That's just it. Where's the time for prayer, or for devotions, or for worship, or for my faith?

DICK: You know, when we depend on ourselves for the complexities of life today we are doomed to fail. In fact, I sometimes fear we may end up losing faith in God by trusting too much in ourselves.

DEAN: But did you hear the epistle in worship Sunday? **8 He will keep you**

strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. I've been feeling like you Dick, but God gave me hope in that verse.

DIANE: Well, I was thinking about that too. If God is faithful to me, not just by sending Jesus for a sinner like me, but in promising to keep me strong to the end, maybe I should spend more time actually relying on Him, than on myself.

DICK: He does give us the gifts of prayer and of Scriptures, He gives us the Church and other Christians, He gives us worship and the Sacraments. God sends His Spirit. *He is working hard* to keep us in faith!

DEAN: It's good to know that in spite of my stubborn self-reliance, that God's faithfulness is shown throughout my life.

DIANE: I've got an idea. Next time we get together for coffee, everyone bring one prayer request. We'll pray for each other.

DICK: God *is* faithful. Let's do it!

DEAN: See you next week.

THE THIRD LESSON Mark 13: 24-37

(Jesus calls His disciples to "Watch.")

24 "But in those days, following that distress, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' 26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

28 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: **'Watch!'**"

THE CHANCEL DRAMA

(Dick and Tom and Tim standing in line at a Subway)

DICK: (ordering) Make mine a six inch meat ball sub. (Tim and Tom walk in behind Dick.) O hi, Tim. Hi Tom.

TOM: Hi Dick.

TIM: Dick, did I hear right? Was Jonathan killed in a car wreck last night?

DICK: I'm afraid so.

TOM: What a tragedy!

TIM: You never know, do you?

DICK: He was younger than I am. It's so unexpected. I guess you need to always be ready.

TOM: I'll have a 6 inch Turkey on that kind of break right there.

TIM: Tom, I'm glad we went fishing with him the other day.

TOM: He did seem different. He told me he apologized a home and things were better. He didn't seem so hurried.

DICK: Jonathan and I talked and he said a couple of things. First, he said you guys talked about sin. He said that just being able to know that God knows about our sin and still loves us made him more able to confess his failings. That's what he did at home, and I think at church too. Secondly he also said that you talked about God's coming, and he was really looking forward to Christmas this year.

TIM: I'll have a sweet onion teriyaki, please. Well, I'm glad to hear that. It seems God already came to Jonathan.

DICK: Dean and Diane and I had a talk too. We decided we needed to spend more time relying on God than on ourselves.

TOM: Do you remember that Gospel lesson a couple of weeks ago. **What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'WATCH!'**

TIM: Every once in a while life brings us up short and we remember just how much we really need the Lord and His forgiveness, and strength.

DICK: Well, I'd say from my recent conversations Jonathan was trusting and watching. And God is faithful. That will make Christmas a whole lot more meaningful this year, won't it?

TOM: Really, what more could we ask? We all deserve God's punishment, but He comes in love to save us, to forgive us, to keep us strong. That is reason to celebrate, Dick!