

11/28/2010

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY (Part of the Advent Lighting ceremony)

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By His coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Isaiah 2:1-5 (read responsively)

(The prophet Isaiah describes the joy of the Messianic age.)

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. **5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.**

THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 24:36-44

(Preparing for Jesus' known but unexpected second coming!)

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

INTRO - Do you know what time it is? Yes Advent, beginning of Christmas season. But if you look at the calendar it is November 28. If you look outside, it is now dark more than light. On Friday there was only 6 hours and 25 minutes of light, with a loss of 4 minutes and 11 seconds. Are you feeling it yet? This can be a dark and difficult time for many. And guess what, the dark is getting longer for still about another month.

I. God talks about our world being one of darkness. And in today's Old Testament lesson he calls us to the light. We are told **5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.** But, why listen to me? Do you know that this year in the assigned readings all the Old Testament lessons come from Isaiah? Let's listen to Isaiah give the call of God.

II. Hello, your pastor has asked me to visit with you this Advent. I'll be here each Sunday in Advent, today and the next 3 Sundays. He said today you are looking at what God inspired in my book in chapter 2, and my call to walk in the light of the Lord.

A. There is a reason these words were written. They sound like light, but, they were written to people in a dark time, getting darker, sort of like you.

1. In verse 2 I tell the people of Judea, **2 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.** At one time Israel had been a powerful country.

Jerusalem had been an important city. But that had changed. It was a time of darkness, and the people didn't know the darkness was growing. The truth is in the future the country and city would be conquered and destroyed. But, because of God's promised Messiah the events that happen in Jerusalem would cause all Jerusalem to be important again. Love and faith and light would come from that dark time and dark place.

2. In verses 3 and 4 I talked about another darkness. The people had been turning from God. As they turned from the Lord, they also turned against one another. You know about hate, and fights, and war too, don't you? But, because of the Messiah a new day was coming. **3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.**

B. You see, the people thought their darkness was because of bad things in the world around them. Actually, the darkness was in them. They knew this but didn't want to hear it. But, they did want to hear about the good that really was coming. They would listen to the time that Jerusalem would be important, when relationships with God and others would be peace and love. You might ask me, "Were these promises actually for their lives, or received in eternity?" The answer is "Yes. When God changes our forever, that forever changes today."

1. God is light, the author of light and God changed forever in Jerusalem. God's Son Jesus came to this dark world of sin, and disagreement, and war.

2. In Jerusalem Jesus took the darkness of the world on himself. In Jerusalem Jesus died to pay for the darkness and sin of the world, yes yours too.

3. In Jerusalem, the Messiah rose from the dead, defeating sin and death, and offers forgiveness and love and life to all who believe in Him. Jesus brought light that is even more powerful than the darkness that was in the lives of the Jews, light that is more powerful than the sin and darkness you face.

4. That is why, in a dark world, I called the Jews to walk in the light. God was their only hope. Yours too.

C. But, it is my job to talk about the time 2600 years ago, it is your pastor's job to talk about you walking in the light.

III. Hello again. In this dark time people fight darkness in many ways. Some use light boxes, and sit in front of them to fight off the dreariness of the darkness. But, as Isaiah told His people, and as God tells us today, there is a greater darkness facing us, our sin. Yet, in Jesus there is a light stronger than our darkness. Walk in Jesus. Live your faith, don't just say you believe. Live in Jesus' light.

A. When the world is going badly for you, and things are getting dark, Walk in the light. Know you are loved by God with an eternal love. Even when things are the worst, Jesus died for you, and rose for you. He loves and forgives you. Jerusalem can be lifted up in your hearts because what God has done for you in Jesus really has made a difference, not only forever, but today. You can have hope in bad times because of Jesus. That is walking in the light.

B. Walk in the light. God loved you when you deserved punishment, He sacrificed His Son to give you forgiveness. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Is there anyone you need to love? God doesn't just forgive us eternally, but swords really can be turned into plows today. Walk in the light.

C. Walk in the light. Do you know when you worship, God is present with you, and He is present with those around you. Even when you struggle to pay attention, you are in the light of the love and forgiveness of God.

CONCLUSION - Do you know why I ice fish? Yes, I like to fish, but perhaps as important to me when I fish during a dark time I get outdoors into some light, though I haven't really ice-fished yet this year. It may be showing. As you worship today, as you turn in faith to God and live your faith, even in this dark world of sin and pain, the light of Jesus shines through.