Advent 1 A

MDP of God

Before performing a baptism, the priest approached the young father and said solemnly, "Baptism is a serious step. Are you prepared for it?"

"I think so," the man replied. "My wife has made appetizers and we have a caterer coming to provide plenty of cookies and cakes for all of our guests."

"I don't mean that," the priest responded. "I mean, are you prepared spiritually?"

"Oh, **spiritually**--sure," came the reply. "I've got a keg of beer and a case of whiskey --=-**we have all the spirits we’ll need**"—that father didn’t get what being prepared was about

My dear friends—the season of Advent is all about being prepared for the coming of the Lord

The first couple of weeks of Advent we focus on being prepared when the Son of Mary returns in glory to judge the living

The last couple weeks of Advent—*we look back*-- we focus more on being prepared to celebrate His 1st coming—when Jesus humbled Himself to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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I just want to clarify for you –what the bible says about the coming of Jesus at the end of time

In three of the four gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—they each have what theologians call “a little apocalypse”

The 4th gospel –John doesn’t have a “little apocalypse”—because he wrote a “big apocalypse”—the book of Revelation

Apocalyptic literature uses a lot of vivid imagery—often violent imagery to get the point across—*and it can be very confusing*---and these “little apocalypses” in the bible are confusing to a lot of people [the big one—the Book of Revelation—is confusing too]

Our gospel today is from Matthew’s gospel—and it’s from his “little apocalypse”

One of the things that make these “little apocalypses” so hard to understand is that Jesus talks about two separate events—He speaks about the destruction of the Temple—*that occurred in the year 70 AD*---**and** He speaks about the end of the world

In these “little apocalypses” Jesus speaks about *the signs that will occur before the destruction of the Temple*—wars-insurrections—famines – plagues and great signs in the heavens

And all of those things happened before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD

But Jesus then goes on to talk about the end of the world---*and He speaks much differently about that*

So in today’s gospel He’s talking about the end of the world and He says, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. **They did not know** until the flood came and carried them all away. *So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.”*

Later Jesus says, “So you too must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect the Son of Man will come… Therefore, stay awake- for you know neither the day or the hour”

In other words –for the end of the world—**there are no signs**—it will happen suddenly –unexpectedly—without warning

In the year 70 AD when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed—more than 1.5 million people were killed—*but not a single Christian died*—why? **because the Christians knew it was going to happen**—Jesus had warned them—He told them the signs—and the signs appeared

The Jewish historian Josephus tells of how when the Romans circled the city—that there were great signs in the sky—with strange movements of the stars and the moon---as the Roman army circled the city *many of the scribes and Pharisees saw those wonders in the heavens as a sign of hope that God was going to act to save the holy city*

But the Christians knew that the wonders in the heavens *were a sign of God’s judgment on His people* who rejected their Savior and refused to come to faith

But after Jesus speaks of the destruction of the Temple—He goes on to speak of the end of the world

**Where there are no signs**—where it happens at a time when no one expects it—where life has been going on normally just like before the flood

My friends –it’s important to understand this distinction between the Destruction of the Temple and the end of the world—because some people have confused the two and have actually lost their faith over it

How did they lose their faith?

Well one of the things that Jesus spoke of with the Destruction of the Temple—He says, “Amen, I say to you, **this generation** *will not pass away until all these things have taken place”*

Well some people—thinking Jesus was talking about the end of the world—say, “Jesus was wrong—the Apostles were wrong—the bible was wrong” – *So if they were wrong about the end of the world*—**they could have been wrong about morality**—about what’s right and what’s wrong—what God forbids and what God commands---*so I have to figure out what wrong for me and* ***what’s right for me***

Because they confuse the Destruction of the Temple and the end of the world—*they think Jesus was wrong*---**well folks Jesus can’t be wrong—He’s God**—*He can’t be wrong*—He’s not wrong about the end of the world and He’s not wrong about the morality –the bible’s not wrong either—it’s the inspired Word of God-**it can’t be wrong**

Folks--people put their salvation at risk when falsely think Jesus and the bible are wrong

Our whole theme of Advent is “Be prepared”--- be prepared to meet Jesus in all His glory—be prepared for judgement—be prepared for the coming of the Lord

Well if people live as if Jesus was wrong—as if the bible is wrong—as if we can’t know right from wrong –good from evil because the bible was wrong---**the simple truth is they won’t be prepared to meet the Lord**—they won’t be prepared to face judgement – they won’t be prepared when Jesus comes

Whether they meet Him when He comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead—or they meet Him when they die and leave this life---if people are living their life in a manner where they think Jesus was wrong---*chances are* **they won’t be prepared to meet Him**

My friends—it’s so important that we believe everything Jesus taught—it’s so important that we believe the teaching of the bible when it comes to morality

Because without the sure guidance of the bible—without the sure guidance of the teaching of Jesus---*we’ll be wandering in the darkness*—**we’ll be lost**—we won’t know which way to turn –how to live—what the Lord expects of us and what the Lord forbids ---/// *and because we have a fallen human nature our feelings are going to lead us in the wrong direction*

In our 1st reading today it said, “Come, let us climb the LORD’s mountain…that he may instruct us in his ways”—*folks there is clear instruction in the bible—you can trust your soul to that instruction*

So on this 1st Sunday of Advent—I want to assure you that we have sure guidance from the Lord on good and evil—what’s right and what’s wrong—what the Lord expects of us and what the Lord forbids

*Let’s trust God’s Word*—**let’s trust the teaching of Jesus and His Church which He promised to guide in all truth**—Let’s live by that teaching so the we will be prepared to meet the Lord when He comes