Advent 1 C

MDP of God

Have you noticed that there are a lot of dare devils this time of the year

There are people who get up on high ladders- stretching and reaching out far- literally putting their life and health on the line –in order to put up Christmas lights

*Lights are of course a wonderful way that we prepare for Christmas-* because the lights are meant to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world

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In our readings this week *– and this will be a common thread throughout this Advent season* – the theme is “Prepare”

And of course- the way many of us prepare for Christmas – is decorating the outside and inside of our homes- with lights- tinsel – trees and gifts—*and that’s all great*

But our readings are telling us *to prepare our hearts*- to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord

The Prophet Jeremiah in our 1st reading says- “the days are coming says the Lord… I will raise up for David a just shoot”

The word for shoot literally means “branch\_ - he uses the Hebrew word Na-zar---*Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise*--- He was known in His life as Jesus of Nazareth--- the root of Nazareth is Na-zar--- so Jesus is literally from “branchtown”--- and He’s the branch of the tree of David that the Prophet was telling the people about

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And in the context of this Jeremiah is telling the people that they need to prepare their hearts for the Lord- they need to strive for holiness- *because at the time a lot of people weren’t really living the faith* and the world was filled with darkness as a result---

In fact it was at the time of Jeremiah that God allowed the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Temple for the 1st time

In our 2nd reading from St Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians- the Apostle is telling the people to grow in holiness – to grow in love – to grow in faithfulness – *to grow in the life of Christ*

And the good news in what Paul was writing is that the Thessalonians were striving for holiness – they really were being faithful to Jesus – but Paul is calling them to strive for even greater holiness

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And then finally in the gospel- Jesus speaks of His coming again in glory

And He makes it clear that for those who are faithful to Him – *that they should raise their heads and stand erect for their redemption is at hand*—for those who refuse to put their faith in Him – or those who are lax in faith – *it will be a time of terror*

So again the theme is “Be ready” --“Be prepared”

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Now it’s important to understand when Jesus or the other scriptures speaks of His immanent coming ---they are referring to the destruction of the Temple that occurred in the year 70 AD

It’s really important to understand how biblical prophecy works – often times the prophetic visions compress several different historical times into one vision

So for Jesus in the gospels- and St John in the book of Revelation--- the visions they give refer **both** to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD--- *and that is meant to prefigure what will happen at the end of the world*

You see for the Jewish people the Temple was a microcosm of the world—for them the world was a macro-temple [it’s made for the worship of God]--- so what happens to the Temple in 70 AD is meant to prefigure what will happen at the end of the world

It’s really important to understand this – because many people think Jesus was wrong about what He said will happen- they’ll say “Jesus was wrong… Jesus said ‘this generation will not pass away until all these things happen’- Jesus was wrong, the world didn’t end”

*And of course what Jesus said wasn’t wrong*--- **the world as the people of Israel and Judah knew it --did end**—the world with the Temple representing God’s presence- the world of animal sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood--- the world of the worship of God being centered in Jerusalem-*all that did end*

 **The world as they knew it ended**

God gave the people of Jerusalem 40 years to repent – 40 years to come to faith in Jesus--- and then their city was destroyed- *the Temple of God was destroyed* ***---*Never to be rebuilt**

And we have records from secular historians that there were great signs in the sky [like Jesus said]- before the destruction of Jerusalem

Many of the people of Jerusalem took those signs in the sky as reason for hope – a sign from God that He was going to deliver them as the Romans circled the city—*but the Christians knew that wasn’t the case*--- the Christians knew that it was a sign of God’s judgment on the city

While one million people died when Jerusalem was destroyed- we know that not one Christian died *– because they knew it was coming* – the Christians all had fled—because Jesus told them it was coming- the Book of Revelation warned them what was coming—so the Christians had all fled

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And what happens in 70 AD is meant to point to the end of the world

And Jesus says of that, no one knows the day or the hour- not the angels not even the Son

Jesus and the early Christians expected *the destruction of Jerusalem* – the destruction of the Temple---which was the end of the world as they had known it---**they did not expect the entire world to end**

It’s important to understand that- because people have lost their faith over thinking Jesus was wrong- **He wasn’t**--- *He’s God, He can’t be wrong*

My friends, just as we prepare our houses by putting up lights- and our houses by putting up trees and buying and wrapping gifts--- *our readings today are telling us that it’s important that we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord*

 How can we do that? ---- I just want to offer a few suggestions

**First**- give witness to Jesus the light of the world

Many people today are trying to take Jesus out of what they call “the holiday season”

*Let people know that you are celebrating Jesus the Christ*- wish people a Merry Christmas---many today want you to be politically correct and say “Happy Holidays”

*That phrase leaves Jesus out of the equation*—**don’t do that**—wish people a Merry Christmas – simple little words where you can give witness to Jesus-that can bring His light into the world

Secondly- pray

[???} In the bulletin you have the readings for every day of the week that will be read at Mass---those readings are also very easily accessible on line—*you can pray with the Church throughout the world in praying over the readings that will be read at Mass every day*[read in the churches throughout the world]

**Pray the rosary** – especially the Joyful mysteries—Mary is a big part of this season- invite her to be a part of your journey closer to her Son *– she wants to help you grow closer to her Son*

Third- *share Jesus with your family*

A lot of times we get a lot of presents under the Christmas tree—but when Christmas is over we’re no closer to Jesus then before Christmas began

Maybe during this holy season you could read the gospel for daily Mass together- before dinner- or before bedtime*---- so that as a family you focus on Jesus together*- maybe share thoughts about the gospel so that as a family you pray together [let Jesus speak to you together]

At the beginning of the homily I spoke of dare devils who climb up ladders to string lights inside and outside of their homes

*And that’s fine to do*- but please don’t just get your house ready for Christmas – **get your heart ready for Christmas**

 *Climb the ladder of faith*

Share the light of Jesus with others by wishing them a Merry Christmas

 Pray

 Share Jesus with your family—in that way you can allow the light of Christ

 To shine more brightly in a world filled with darkness

**God bless you and Merry Christmas!!!!**