

Pastor's Bible Class

December 6, 2020

The Second Sunday in Advent – Series B

Read Psalm 85:1-13

- ¹LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- ²You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin.
- ³You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.
- ⁴Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!
- ⁵Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
- ⁶Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
- ⁷Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.
- ⁸Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
**for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.**
- ⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.
- ¹²Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
- ¹³Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.

Read Isaiah 40:1-11.

1. The opening verse of this text is a hallmark of the Advent season. What meaning did these words have for Israel? What meaning do they have for us?
2. About verse one Martin Luther wrote: “God’s people are those who need comfort because they have been terrified by the Law and are an empty vessel, capable of receiving comfort.

Only those who are afflicted have comfort and are capable of it, because comfort means nothing unless there is a malady” (LW, 17:3). How is this thought reflected in the season of Advent?

3. What is the proclamation of comfort offered in verse two?
4. Beginning in verse three, Isaiah points to John the Baptist. What does this “voice” proclaim?
5. What human problem is identified in verses 6-8?
6. What answer is given to this problem in verses 9-11?

Read Mark 1:1-8.

7. What is conspicuously absent from the beginning of Mark’s Gospel?
8. What critical information *does* Mark provide in verse one?
9. What was the purpose of John’s baptism according to verse 4?
10. Why did “all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem” go out to be baptized by John?
11. How does John’s baptism relate to the words spoken in today’s Old Testament reading from Isaiah?
12. John’s words speak about a baptism “with the Holy Spirit.” To what is John referring? See John 3:5, John 7:39, Acts 11:16 and Ephesians 4:4-6.

Devotional Thought from *The Lutheran Study Bible*

John warns us not to adopt worldly values and expectations. Happily, all of us who are baptized have received the promised Holy Spirit, who continually forgives us, restores us, and focuses us on the splendor of Jesus’ second coming (TLSB, 1655).

Closing Prayer

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.