

## The Second Sunday before Advent - November 13, 2016



It's easy to be overwhelmed by the evil and suffering in the world. It is also easy to be overwhelmed by the grand scope and challenge of the Gospel and its vision of a restored world. But, in the midst of these two overwhelming realities is a simple, but powerful response – the contribution that is made by a life of daily discipline and faithfulness to what is right. Such small contributions, when put together, make a significant difference in the big scheme of things. Again, it's not the first time the lectionary has challenged us in this way, but it is an important message as we seek to live out our faith in practical ways that do offer value to others.

**May we be inspired to continue our small, faithful acts of following Christ through this week's**

### INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**Isaiah 65:17-25**: Isaiah's vision of a new heaven and new earth, a place where God dwells, and where all people enjoy prosperity, health, well-being and long life.

OR **Malachi 4:1-2**: Evil and arrogant people will be destroyed like straw burned in a furnace, but for those who love and fear God, the "Sun of Righteousness" rises as healer and liberator.

**Isaiah 12**: A promise that a time is coming when God's people will call on God and be delivered, when they will praise God for God's goodness and mighty acts on their behalf, and when they will publicise God's praise to the world.

OR **Psalms 98**: A song of praise inviting all creation to celebrate God's salvation and mercy.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**: Paul admonishes the believers to be disciplined, to concentrate on their own work and do it well, and to ensure that they do not grow tired of doing what is right.

**Luke 21:5-19**: Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, and warns his followers about the false messiahs, wars, and persecutions that they will have to face.

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

O God,  
whose blessed Son was manifested  
that he might destroy the works of the devil,  
and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life;  
Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope,  
we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure;  
that when he shall appear again with power and great glory,

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we may be made like unto him  
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;  
where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit,  
he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

and/or

Heavenly Father,  
whose blessed Son was revealed to destroy the works of the devil  
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:  
Grant that we, having this hope,  
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;  
that when he shall appear in power and great glory,  
we may be made like him  
in his eternal and glorious kingdom;  
where he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**P** Gracious Lord, Your love endures forever. You demonstrated that love by sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world for us and our salvation. He showed forth that love by His innocent suffering and death. You confirmed His loving sacrifice by His physical Resurrection from the dead. You have revealed Your love for us in Your Holy Word. We thank You for the delivery of the gift of faith and of hearts that love You through the work of the Holy Spirit. Help us to love one another with the love You have given to us in anticipation of that great Day of the Lord. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

**P** Grant us a proper understanding of good works, O Lord, that they may indeed prove that faith is living. Provide us many opportunities to serve You by serving our neighbours in need. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

**P** Protect us from false teachings and false teachers that none may be deprived of eternal life in Your Son. Therefore, bless all pastors, teachers, professional church workers and leaders in Your Church, that they may be grounded in Your Word, pure of character, trustworthy, resolute in purpose, and united in the mind of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

**P** Inspire Your people to serve with eager hearts and faithful hands, O Lord—to gladly support the spread of the Gospel in sharing it themselves and providing for those who do. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** **hear our prayer.**

**P** Bless, O Lord, all godly vocations. Break and hinder the work of those whose livelihood is founded in evil and contrary to Your Ten Commandments. We thank

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You for the abundant harvest of field and farmyard, office and factory, goods and services. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** hear our prayer.

P Gracious God, grant Your healing to those who are sick or facing surgery (*especially* \_\_\_\_\_). Give their physicians caring wisdom and skill to do their work effectively to Your glory and for the good of their patients. Comfort those who mourn the death of loved ones (*especially* \_\_\_\_\_). Calm their troubled hearts and give them peace to face the days ahead in the confidence that You will never forsake them. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** hear our prayer.

P Prepare us for Your return, O Lord, through the blessings of Your Holy Supper. Through the eating and drinking of Your most precious body and blood, nourish our troubled hearts that we may watch and await Your return with holy patience. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C** hear our prayer.

P All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

### POST COMMUNION

Gracious Lord,  
in this holy sacrament you give substance to our hope.  
Bring us at the last to that pure life for which we long,  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

### PRAYERS

God of faithful surprises,  
throughout the ages  
you have made known your love and power  
in unexpected ways and places.  
May we daily perceive  
the joy and wonder of your abiding presence  
and offer our lives in gratitude  
for our redemption. Amen.

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers, God of power,  
and through the ministry of your Son  
free us from the grip of the tomb,

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that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,  
and guided them in the way of your love,  
so listen now to those who call upon you.  
Move us to praise your gracious will,  
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death  
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,  
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens  
and healed our spirits.  
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,  
those seeking healing,  
those in need within the church and the world.  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,  
you call us to love and serve you  
with body, mind, and spirit  
through loving your creation  
and our sisters and brothers.  
Open our hearts in compassion  
and receive these petitions  
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.  
Holy One,  
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards  
of the fragile bounty of this earth  
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,  
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,  
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.  
We offer these prayers of love  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
Loving God,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and draw us closer to you,  
that the whole world may be one with you  
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,  
you who hear the cries of those in need,  
receive these petitions of your people  
that all who are troubled  
may know peace, comfort, and courage.

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Life-giving God,  
heal our lives,  
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds  
and offer you thanks from generation to generation  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,  
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,  
hear our prayers  
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,  
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings  
with your unending compassion.  
Redeeming Sustainer,  
visit your people  
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,  
that we may hurry to make you welcome  
not only in our concern for others,  
but by serving them  
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

O God,  
in Christ you give us hope  
for a new heaven and a new earth.  
Grant us wisdom to interpret the signs of our times,  
courage to stand in the time of trial,  
and faith to witness to your truth and love. Amen.

God, our God,  
you hear our cry and listen to our prayer.  
Grant that we may know that our redeemer lives  
and, trusting in you,  
be confident that we will not be lost or forgotten.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

### LECTIONARY NOTES

#### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

In most of the readings this week, two themes seem to stand side by side. The first is the theme of evil, persecution and God's judgement on wickedness. Malachi and Luke's Gospel speak directly about this, and of how God protects God's faithful ones through such turbulent times, while Isaiah 12 implies it. The second theme is that of restoration and of God's final, peaceful, prosperous world, in which all people live in well-being and joy. Isaiah 12 & 65 and Psalm 98 all describe this. These two themes complement each other in that they describe the working out of God's salvation history in human affairs: evil and strife are at work in the world, and people who live according God's alternative values are misunderstood and persecuted, but God's reign continues to work, and to transform the world and its people into loving, peaceful and just men and women. This is not so much a war between good and evil as it is the evolution of the world from chaos and immaturity into beauty, creativity and maturity in God's gracious, compassionate purposes. In the

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middle of this grand cosmic scenario, Paul's message to the Thessalonians appears prosaic and misplaced. However, when it comes down to it, the very thing that sustains us during the turbulent times, and that ultimately transforms worlds, is the committed, disciplined living of a good, responsible, practical life by people of faith. Simply by working each day faithfully and in goodness, God's salvation and 'shalom' enters our world. Small contributions really do make a difference in the grand scheme of things.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** If we are to take the Gospel call to justice – to participating in Jesus' saving mission – seriously, we cannot ignore the big global injustices that continue to harm people and our environment across the globe. It is significant and important that there are people and organisations that tackle these issues broadly and with great influence and reach. As followers of Christ we do well to support them through our contributions, our support and adding our voice and presence to petitions, marches and legislative initiatives. However, it is equally important that we recognise the power of our daily decisions and actions to bring about significant change. When we commit to the discipline of conscious consumerism – buying only fair trade goods, and buying for usefulness and longevity, rather than fashion – we contribute significantly to justice in the world. When we eat mindfully, choosing only produce that is farmed and transported ethically and with care for the environment, and when we recycle, precycle and manage our waste carefully, we make a significant contribution to justice in the world. When we treat our neighbours respectfully, regardless of religion, ethnicity or immigration status, we contribute to justice in the world. When we joyfully, honestly and generously contribute our share to society through charitable giving and paying taxes, we contribute to justice in the world. When we love even those who might persecute or attack us, and when we work towards understanding and peace with our enemies, we contribute to justice in the world. All of these simple daily actions are part of what Paul calls "doing what is right", and they are manifestations of God's peaceful, prosperous reign. They are not always easy or comfortable, and sometimes they will even get us into trouble with those who defend the status quo and resist change, but they are, nevertheless, a genuine Gospel way of being and living. Of course, what I'm saying here is nothing new – and it's not the first time the lectionary has approached God's reign from this perspective this year. But, it's often good to be reminded how our small, faithful, disciplined actions can make a big difference.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the "big issues" of justice in our world, and forget that justice also needs to be worked out right on our own doorstep – as Mother Teresa so wisely put it: "we cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love". In the past the church communities have sometimes become so focused on "overseas mission" that we have neglected the mission fields in our own neighbourhoods. We have sometimes been so concerned with fighting injustice "out there" that we have ignored the battered women, the neglected children, the abusive leaders and the exploitative practices in our own churches. As important as it is to work for justice in the world, and to contribute to the big issues, we must never forget the small, daily disciplines of worship, prophetic preaching, care and nurture that ensure that together we become more whole, peaceful and compassionate human beings. And as we care for the hurting, exploited and abused people among us, the healing and justice we bring is like a stone dropped into a pond – it sends ripples out into the world that make a big difference. So, perhaps a question to ask this week is this: how does our worship and our life together as a community of faith provide safety for those who are abused and under threat, provide community and belonging for those who are excluded and judged, and provide nurture and support for those who are in need of physical, emotional, mental or spiritual resources?

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### SERMON OUTLINE

Lk 21:5-19 speaking about the temple 2bf AdvC/28C

Jesus had been teaching on the Temple Mount, & as some of the company remarked on the beauty of the Temple, he replied *the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another, all will be cast down* - people prised them apart for molten gold

**1. The Temple:-** magnificent building by Herod Gt - **Josephus:** *the outward facade - was covered all over with plates of gold which at sunrise reflected a fiery splendour - at a distance shimmered like a mountain covered with snow.* It was one of the wonders of the world - *adorned with beautiful stones & gifts dedicated to God* - massive in size - 40 x 18 x 12ft...

**2. The Teacher:-** speaks of the coming Day of the Lord - bringing to a close the present age.. But leading up to it, dreadful things will happen on the earth...

**3. The Terror:-** wars & insurrections (9) nation will rise up agnst nation & kingdom agnst kingdom - history of the world - with dreadful suffering, destruction & loss of life

**4. The Turmoil:-** *earthquakes & famine & plagues* - still a feature of our world today - & just as fearsome

**5. The Testimony:-** of Xians - facing trials & tribulations - *before kings & governors (12) becos of my name - an opportunity (13) to testify.* Terrible times lie ahead for believers - *hated by all becos of my name (17) but not a hair of your head will perish - by your endurance you will gain your souls - win eternal life. He who endures to the end will be saved (Mk 13.13) - the eternal prize awarded to the faithful in Christ in all generations....*  
By Norman Porteous

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"The Penultimate" by the Rev James Liggett, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network  
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2016/09/23/the-penultimate-proper-28c/>

"Live today, wonder about tomorrow," the Rev. Andrew K. Barnett, Sermons that Work, Episcopal Digital Network  
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/11/01/26-pentecost-proper-28-c-2013/>

"All Will Be Thrown Down," the Very Rev. Samuel G. Candler, Day 1  
On [Luke 21:5-19](#)  
[http://day1.org/2380-all\\_will\\_be\\_thrown\\_down](http://day1.org/2380-all_will_be_thrown_down)

"Soul Crafting," the Rev. Dr. Fred R. Anderson, Day 1  
On [2 Thessalonians 3:6-13](#)  
[http://day1.org/1073-soul\\_crafting](http://day1.org/1073-soul_crafting)

[Stewardship Sermons](#), Pastor Edward F. Markquart, Grace Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington.



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<http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/stewardship.htm>

### CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Proper 25, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown,  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/year-c-proper-28-33rd-sunday-in.html>

[Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity](#), Ordinary 33, at *word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary* by Larry Broding.  
<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

["Sermon of the Week,"](#) / Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.  
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>