

Pericope Study for Sunday, November 27, 2016 – Advent 1A

Presented Tue 11/22/16 by Richard Burgess

Collect / Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (ELW)

General Thoughts on Advent 1A

“if we emphasize waiting (in Advent), we may miss the point. Waiting is a passive practice. . . . But the readings are clear: this isn’t about waiting; it’s about carefully examining two ways of being in the world and then making a choice, a commitment to act according to one of those ways. And, as the readings also make clear, there’s an urgency driving the decision. If, as process theologians believe, God is present in every decision, then the “day of the Lord” is always at hand.” (Slettom, Jeanyne, “Process and Faith Lectionary Commentary”, <http://www.processandfaith.org/lectionary/YearA/2010-2011/2010-11-28-Advent1.shtml>)

What does Advent mean in the context of a shrinking American Church? How does the expectation and active readiness of these lessons speak to us?

There are a lot of parallelisms in this week’s lessons. What would an Advent full of parallels be like?

Possible Sermon Titles for Advent 1A

As usual, use at your own risk.

Title	Is	Rom	Mt
Are You Looking Forward to Your Judgement?	X	X	X
What Time Is It?	X	X	X
Are We There Yet?	X	X	
Come, Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord	X		
Swords into Plowshares, Spears into Pruning Hooks	X		
Teach Us Your Ways that We Might Walk in Your Paths	X		
What Do You Do with a Pruning Hook?	X		
Jesus Is Coming – Is That Good or Bad?		X	X
Wake Up!		X	X
Laying Aside and Putting On		X	
No Room for the Flesh		X	
Out with the Darkness, In with the Light		X	
Salvation Is Near – What Are You Going to Do about It?		X	
Are You Ready?			X
Taken or Left? It’s Your Decision			X

Isaiah 2:1-5

^{2.1}The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord!

Notes, Observations, and Thought

Questions:

Nb: All four Sundays in Advent have first lessons from First Isaiah. Why is Isaiah so popular in Advent?

2.1 *Isaiah son of Amoz* First Isaiah was probably active in the late 8th century BCE (low 700's) in pre-exilic Judah, though this passage may have post-exilic origin. (Source criticism / provenance gets complicated in Isaiah.) What do you make of this straddling the exile?

2.2, 4 *nations* Hebrew: *goyim*, ie, non-Jews. (LXX: *ethnē / ethnon*)

2.2–3 "The theme of people 'flowing' to Zion is a reversal of the theme of the river which was said to flow from the divine mountain (cf. Ezekiel 47). Where once water flowed out giving life to the entire world, now people flow in." (Wallace, Howard "OT Lectionary Readings", <http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/WebOTcomments/AdventA/Advent1Isa2.html>, ¶14)

2.2 *In the days to come* When were / are / will be these days? Are we there yet?

2.3 *Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go . . . that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths* What is to draw all these people to the "ways" and "paths" of the LORD?

2.3 *instruction* Hebrew: *torah*. Could one stretch this to Greek *logos*?

2.4 Is this peace true peace in its own right or is it some kind of forced peace like the *Pax Romana*? Ie, will this peace last on its own or is it dependent on the LORD's continuing intervention? How is it related to the "ways", "paths", "instruction", and "word" in 2.3?

2.4 *plowshares . . . pruning hooks* What are the *nations* supposed to do with these new tools? What might be an appropriate non-agricultural metaphor? What is the power of this agricultural image in a post-industrial, information-age?

2.5 *come, let us walk* What does it mean to "walk"?

2.5 *light of the Lord* What can be done with this image? Relevance to this time of the year?

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

13.11 *Besides this* The previous passage was about loving one another. What does one do “besides” loving one another?

13.11 *what time it is* What time is it? How “near” is near for salvation? What did Paul expect? What do / can / should we expect?

13.11 *wake from sleep* What kind of “sleep” is this? How does one “wake” from it?

13.11 *salvation* What is “salvation” in this passage? For your congregation?

13.12 *lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light* What are the works of darkness? The “armor of light”? What is involved in “laying aside” and the “putting on”?

13.14 What does it mean to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*? Is it the same as putting on the “armor of light” in 13.12? Is there a baptism connection here?

13.14 *Lord Jesus Christ* Why these particular titles / names? Do they change when they are put together in this combination?

13.14 *make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires* How literal or metaphorical is / can / does this need to be?

13.14 *flesh* Greek: “sarkos” What does “flesh” mean here”? How will your people hear it?

13.11–14 “This is not an imperative “growing out of” the indicative but a call to activity till he comes. And if it should *appear* that such activity reduces love for neighbor to a mere “passing of time”, so be it, but true love is never a matter of passing the time.” (Harrisville, Roy *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Romans*, p 211.1)

13.11-14 What are the implied consequences for sleeping & waking, darkness & light, Jesus & the flesh, salvation & _____? What is the _____?

Matthew 24:36-44

[Jesus said to the disciples,] ³⁶“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴²Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Notes, Observations, and Thought

Questions:

24.36 The Son doesn't know what the Father is doing? Is this a problem for the Trinity? Cf Jn 5.20 “The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing;” Dare one mix Matthew with John?

24.37, 44 *Son of Man* in the Gospels is Jesus referring to himself. There is probably meaning beyond that, but there seems to be no scholarly consensus as to what that meaning is.

24.39 *they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man* How do we also “know nothing”?

24.40-41 What of this pairs of one taken and another left? What does “taken” mean? “Left”? What is the criteria for who will be which?

24.43 *owner of the house* Who is this? What is the *thief* going to steal?

24.43 *would not have let his house be broken into* What is this “break in” we're supposed to stay awake and prevent?

24.36-44 Why doesn't Jesus (or the Father) just tell us when the time is so we can be ready? Or just come now so we don't have to risk missing out? What are the theodicy implications? What kind of Advent message does this imply?

24.36-44 “The watching is a dramatic way of speaking about God-connectedness. It is not very edifying if it is reduced to an exhortation not to misbehave in case you get 'caught with your pants down', as they say, when Jesus comes. It is about developing an awareness of what the God of the future is saying and doing in the present, to take a God perspective on the issues of the day and the future and to let that happen at all levels of our reality, from our personal lives to our international community, including our co-reality in creation. It is a stance nourished by the eucharistic vision of hope. It is taking the eucharistic table into the community, into the present, and letting it watch us and keep us awake to what is happening.” (Loader, “First Thoughts”, <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/MtAdvent1.htm>, ¶11)