

SERMON 900

December 7, 2014

The Second Sunday of Advent

975th Week as Priest

802nd Week at St Dunstan's

67th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

THE BEGINNING, AGAIN.

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

I love the fact that the Christian Year gives us a chance to try to begin again, to start our lives over again, to have another opportunity to learn to live a life of faith. It's not that I think we intend to sin, or to turn away from God, but that we forget.

So each year at this time, at the beginning of the Season of Advent, we hear once again—as if for the very first time—that call to rest and return.

There it is, at the opening of the Gospel of Mark ...

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out

in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’

This is good news indeed, and in these words we find hope and a future. Each time Jesus Christ comes into the world—into *our* world—we have every reason in the world to shout and to celebrate that we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. He is the Messiah, the true Son of God, who has come into the world to save us from the power of sin and death, and to make of us something more than we are, something better than we are.

From the very beginning of creation, before time and the telling of the story, he was the Word that was with God. And God brought into being all things through the creative power of that Word. The story becomes most important for us at the fullness of time, for it is at that moment that he came into the world. Emmanuel, God who is with us, and he came most unusually, most unexpectedly, as an innocent child, a baby born in a manger. It is for this child, this Holy Child, that we wait and watch this Advent season. He is the Incarnate One, and it is this revelation of God that means the most to us as Christian people.

God is no longer distant, aloof, and arbitrary. God is with us, among us, and one of us. He is made a human

being, for this is the only way that we can come fully to know him and to love him. This is the only way that we can understand the depth of his love and the extent of his sacrifice.

Doubters of Christ will say that he is a fake and a fraud, that he was not the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. It is easy not to believe. All it takes is the ability to say ‘no,’ which is the easiest thing in the world. ‘No’ is most often the first word of a child. Do you want something to eat? No. Would you like to take a nap? No. Are you sure that you aren’t going to be happy, no matter what I do? No.

But Jesus of Nazareth is the ‘Yes’ of this life. Yes, he was born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet Micah said he would be. Yes, he was the Suffering Servant, just as Isaiah foretold. Yes, he was crucified, died, and was buried—and yes, he was raised on the first day of the week.

So as we begin this new Church Year, let us learn to say ‘yes’ to all that is good and holy and true. Let us take on the yoke of Christ and learn from him, that we might be changed by him, transformed by the renewal of our minds, made holy in his sight. Let us put away all darkness and doubt, and let us be children of the light of

Christ. Let us prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight! He is coming into the world, once again, to be born for us, and to be known God's Son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. AMEN.

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