Worship Resources for December 1st, 2019—First Sunday of Advent

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

Narrative Lectionary: Promise of the Messiah, Jeremiah 33:14-18 (Mark 8:27-29)

The season of Advent begins with a word of hope from the prophet Isaiah. In this section, commonly called First Isaiah by scholars, the prophet speaks hope to a people who have gone astray and have abandoned God’s ways. Though the exile is imminent, one day, people from all nations will come to Jerusalem seeking the wisdom of God. A time of peace will come, when God judges and arbitrates between the people, and they choose to turn their weapons of destruction into farming tools, and war will cease.

The psalmist calls upon the congregation to pray for the city of Jerusalem in Psalm 122. The city houses the temple, the home of God among the people as well as the throne of David. All tribes go to Jerusalem to worship, and the psalmist calls them to pray for the peace and prosperity of the city.

Paul tells the church in Rome to be ready, that dawn is approaching. Paul believed that the return of Christ might come in his lifetime and warns them to change their ways and be ready. They need to be witnesses of Christ in their lives, and to not give in to the ways of the world around them. They must outwardly express their faith in Christ through their actions by “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” instead of the actions of quarreling, jealously, and disorderly conduct.

Jesus speaks of the coming of the Son of Man at an unexpected hour in Matthew 24:36-44. No one knows when the day will come, but when Christ comes again, it will be unexpected, as he came to us before. Be ready, Jesus warns his disciples, for the people of Noah’s day weren’t, and the flood came unexpectedly to a people who were focused on living their own lives and not living into God’s ways. Keep awake, as if you expected a thief to come in the middle of the night. Be ready. Christ will come again, into our world and lives in an unexpected way.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the promise of the one coming in the line of David in Jeremiah 33:14-18. The prophet speaks a word of hope to a people going into exile that God will fulfill the promise and raise up a king in the line of David, one who will save Judah and rescue the city of Jerusalem. The priesthood will be restored, and the line of David will be established forever.

Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” in Mark 8:27-29. They respond that some think he’s John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the prophets. But when Jesus asks them that same question, Peter answers, “You are the Messiah.”

Thinking of the liturgical calendar like a spiral that overlaps itself, Advent is the time of year when we look to the end to find our beginning again. We read passages referring the Day of the Lord, the day of judgment, the second coming of Christ. We read passages from the prophets about the coming of a new king—which they hoped for in their time while they faced utter destruction. In those passages, we find hope for our own time. We are preparing for Christmas and the coming of the Christ-child, but in reality, we are reminding ourselves to be awake, to be ready, for Christ will return to our world and lives in an unexpected way. We are waiting for the fulfillment of the kingdom of Christ, by preparing again for Christ to come.

Call to Worship

Awake, for a new day is dawning;

 **Hope sparks and catches flame.**

Arise, for the time is approaching;

 **Peace seizes the hearts of the people.**

Announce to the world that the Lord is coming;

 **Joy fills the air, moves us into the dance of the Spirit.**

The Advent of our God is here!

 **God’s Love is coming into our world and lives in a new way.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Hope of the World, You rise like a shoot from a stump. You are the Resurrection and the Life, springing forth from what was dead and forgotten. You are making all things new. May Your new life spring inside us when we are numb from the world’s despair. May Your new life shine a path for us when we cannot perceive taking the next step. May Your hope spark in us like a match struck that cannot be put out, and may we shine bright, for the world desperately needs it. We pray in the name of Christ, who is coming. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

When we cannot hope, others hope for us. We find our hope in the courage and compassion of those around us. God created us to be together, for it is by loving one another that we know God’s love. When you feel hopeless, know that others are praying for you and with you. Draw near to one another, and you will draw near to God. Know that God loves you, even when it’s hard to find hope. Encourage one another, pray with one another, and know that you are not alone. The Hope of the World is with you. Amen.

Prayer

Light of the World, shine through the cracks in our brokenness. Light of the World, shine a way forward when we cannot discern where to go. Light of the World, guide us with Your wisdom, may Your words be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Light of the World, shine in us, so we might become living hope for others who cannot find the light. Light of the World, burn bright, for much of the universe is in darkness. Sun of Righteousness, rise with healing in your wings, and bring Your light to the world. Amen.