

We begin our Advent journey, new church year; we heard Isaiah tell us **the Word, Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.** Think about that. The Word Isaiah saw. What did Isaiah actually see? We can speculate if He actually saw the virgin birth, the passion, crucifixion, resurrection. I think he did. Isaiah does record it. Interesting too Isaiah records what sounds like the crucifixion even though its 600 years before the Romans invented it. Reading through parts of Isaiah you wouldn't be surprised if he actually saw what was to take place, as we look back to these historical events 2000 years ago. According to Isaiah, this Word would come to the womb of a Virgin, live, suffer, die, resurrection and new creation breaks forth in Him. The Word he saw was -the Word, Jesus.

He saw God keeps His prophetic promises. The Word of God that we see is beyond all imagination – that God would come, dwell among His people is more than His people could ever hope for. What Isaiah saw was God not of distant mountain top, or a God we must ascend to - but the God who walks in the valley of the shadow of death – with us, for us. Isaiah saw not the distant light of a far off God but the nearer Light that shines in our darkness and sin, death cannot overcome it.

This is what we see every Sunday morning. We're not here to have our imagination fed so we can paint our own picture of God. We are not here to listen to a word that fades, alive only in our memories. We are here to see the Word of God made flesh where He makes Himself known. Here, as true, real as anything in this world.

We're here to see that Word made flesh, to believe, trust, (as Isaiah says) **to walk always in the light of the Lord.** To meet the mighty God in humble flesh and blood.

For most all of Christian history, the first Gospel reading of Advent, the Palm Sunday entrance. **Who is this?** Some asked. We must still answer this today. It's not mere knowledge by a confession of faith and way of life. Advent begins the revelation by clearly answering **who is this?** Advent begins with Jesus entrance to His suffering and death -that we make no mistake who is come, why He comes. Then, now, again.

Advent is not some simple call to slow down; but to focus our vision that we see in Christmas, the One whom Isaiah prophesied came not to reform a rebellious people but to pay the price of their sin, to carry the

burden of their failure, to die their death so that they may have His light, His life. If you don't get this, there's nothing. No Advent, no Christmas at all.

Advent is so much more than pre-Christmas. It's like an oasis of humility, reflection of how you live, what you've done, even when surrounded by a desert of consumption and self-indulgence. A season as God's people fasting before the feast, amidst a world that feasts on things that will never satisfy, that idolizes instant gratification.

From the ancient collect, prayer this Sunday; **stir up Your power, O Lord, and come.** But how does the Lord's power come? What are we praying for? The Lord's power isn't safe. To pray that prayer is to pray against ourselves. To pray a death sentence on our sin. To pray for the drowning of your quarrelsome, jealous, drunken, idolatrous, immoral Old Adam in you. To pray all works of sin cast out. The power -God's Law: always condemns you. Exposes you; your sinful, dark heart; stop gratifying your sinful desires, impulses. Repent.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come. But how does the Lord's power come? What are we praying for? The Lord's power is always safe unto you. **The Gospel, the power of salvation for all who believe.** A power unlike any other. His power of forgiveness and life, where He placed His presence, promise; here in these courts, in this place as in no other way in this world.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Come quickly. Come again. Come always to Your children. Thus we join with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven, evermore praising You and saying...you know. Save us now Lord. Hosanna. Joining with them, to greet our King as He humbly comes now.

For this, He is born, laid in a manger, that you would partake of His Holy Body and Blood and your hearts made pure, your Hosannas ever more sincere and urgent. Advent, a time of repentance, preparation, devotions, waiting. 27 days now. Don't let the world rob you of this time you desperately need. Let this staggering joy of His comings flow over and through you and into your homes and communities. Hosanna to the Son of David! Nothing greater to sing than asking your Lord to save you. And your prayer is answered.