



# ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd. Port St. John, FL 32927

Advent 1  
December 3, 2023

## ✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.

The passage selected for the Sermon is taken from the Gospel:

“And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”

You will notice that this week marks a change in the Church Calendar. The Purple on the altar and purple vestments replace the green or white vestments we have worn since Easter. Today we enter the season of Advent, which extends for four Sundays before the celebration of Christmas. We wear purple because Advent is a season of penitential preparation. While the world uses this season as a commercial countdown to Xmas, the Church dedicates this season for meditation on last things, death, judgment and the Apocalypse.

The term Apocalypse is both familiar and misunderstood. Our culture generates an endless stream of post-apocalyptic scenarios in books, movies, and for the younger people, video games. In the cultural version, the Apocalypse is only meant for most of us, who are wiped out by either own stupidity in destroying the earth with nuclear weapons, or by a vengeful manifestation of Mother Nature who turns on us for our constant malice against the elements of earth. What is common to all these post-apocalyptic worlds is that the victim

of the catastrophe is law and judgment. Surviving are a few hearty souls with their own sense of morality, usually vengeful and bloody, and a variety of lawless hoodlums, zombies or some other mutation of the worst of humanity.

The Apocalypse for which we prepare in Advent is very different. First and foremost, it is universal. There will be no hearty bands of bikini clad survivors or voracious mutants. The end time is just that, it is the complete and final dissolution of dominion of this world by Satan, sin and death. There have been a constant stream of interpretations of “Revelations”, and self-proclaimed Messiahs, claiming the end times were scheduled next week or next month. We mock them when each deadline passes, but to be honest, we look at the events of the world, disasters natural and political, and we do wonder if we aren't at the end of time.

The truth is that our day is long spent, and we are approaching the end time. The end time may or may not be the catastrophic end of the world, but it is inevitably the end of our personal world. Whether we are 20 or 90, we are closing in on the end of our days. The moon will be blackened, the sun will cease to shine, and we will be lit only by the love of God that illuminates the world on the other side of the veil of death. We each will experience the Apocalypse, the dissolution of the power of Satan and sin and sickness and death that permeates our living. We will see the end of sadness and despair and fear and loneliness. We will have perfect knowledge, endless love, communion with God and those with whom we shared Godly love.

It is appropriate that we set aside a season to think about our end, not only our termination, but end, meaning the purpose for which we were created. It is good for us, that by fasting and praying, we weaken the bonds of self interest, greed, and materialism that keep us from our commandment to love of God and neighbor. It is good to look beyond the fears and loneliness and sadness of this time to the mystical joy that is to come. That is the purpose of the season of Advent, a worthy purpose which is good for us to embrace.

The reading from the Gospel might seem strangely placed in the context of the Advent season. The procession to the Temple from Palm Sunday starts the passage and it ends with the driving of the merchants from the Temple. However, the passage does perfectly represent the purpose of the season.

When Jesus makes the journey in this passage, from Messiah to purifier of the Temple, He reminds us that the Temple is not made for earthly praise. The Hosannahs of men give way too soon to the purposes of the Prince of this world. The purpose of the Incarnation of Christ is not to fulfill the economic, political or emotional ambitions of this world. His purpose is to separate us from those ambitions, to reacquaint us with our true purpose, to drive from us all that is ungodly, so that our affections will be heavenly when our time on this earth comes to its end, whether that end be cataclysmic or intensely personal.

It is important for us to remember that the successor to the temple is not the parish or cathedral or basilica. The Temple is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. In Baptism, each of us is made the Temple. We are the place where the Holy Spirit of God resides. The reminder of the Gospel today is that the way home to heaven is only navigable through the Cross, that in death, the accolades and the material trappings of this world will be shed. When we encounter Jesus as our Judge, the selfishness, the self-importance, the self-indulgent anxieties of this world will be driven from us so that Temple to be presented to His Judgment will be the pure dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This purification is not something to be feared. We know, despite our desperate attachment to selfishness and materialism, that this world

never brings us lasting joy. When we amass material gain, all we realize is anxiety over its impermanence and greed for what we fear others might have. Selfishness leads only to depression, suspicion, and loneliness. It is only the sacrifices of love, the giving of our possessions, our time, and even our lives, in charity and Godly love, that brings us the blessing of peace. As Christians, we know in our hearts and souls that we are made for the world to come, and that we have live for the world to come even as we toil though the sadness of the world we inhabit now.

That is why we say, in the prayer that Jesus taught us, " Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus, who loves us, doesn't teach us to pray for a Hollywood style Apocalypse. He isn't some mad director leading us all to our doom. The thoughts He has for us are not for evil, but for good.

He teaches us to pray for a Holy Apocalypse, a Holy Advent, one in which we release our desperate grasp on the principles and principalities of this world, which bring us nothing but sadness, loneliness and fear. Jesus wants us to make room in our hearts by driving out the material and selfish and worldly, so that what is Godly can be poured into us, and through us to the people we have been given to love. It is in the Second Coming that the promises that God has made for us will be fulfilled; eternal life, ecstatic joy, the ability to love each other with the unending radiance of Godly love that will enlighten our lives.

The Second Coming is a time we should anticipate. It is a time for which we should prepare. The time is for us to separate ourselves from our attachment to this fallen world, and to look forward to the world we were created to inhabit. The time is now for us to live the prayer that Jesus Himself taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, The Kingdom come, they will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven", in our lives, as it will be in heaven.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*

