

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Metcalfe  
DECEMBER 3, 2023 ADVENT 1  
Reverend Michael Fleming

Fr. Michael: As we enter the new Christian year, we begin by acknowledging that this sacred space lies on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe peoples.

People: **May we continue our journey towards reconciliation in the light of the One who came to see one another as fellow children of God.**

OUR SERVICE BEGINS WITH THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES. Please stand as we hear the words of Scripture, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" sung in procession...

Fr. Michael: Scripture says, "Stay awake, for you do not know neither the day nor the hour when the Lord will appear". Loving God, we thank you for your Son Jesus. He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples; he is the Wisdom that teaches us and guides us. He is Saviour of all. Creator God, let your blessings be upon this wreath. May its branches and all the elements we have gathered together for this season of waiting remind us of the varied ways in which your Spirit is active and present through all creation in every season of our lives. Let your blessing be upon these candles which we will light this Advent season. May they shine as guides, leading us to love, to create, to reason and to live in harmony with creation and with you as we wait for the coming of Christ

God of our mothers and our fathers, give life to people who are weary; fill us with hope in you.

People: **O God, we place our hope in you.**

Fr. Michael: Healer of souls, renew our hope in you; turn us again, O God of Hosts.

People: **O God, we place our hope in you.**

Fr. Michael: Make your dwelling-place among us, O Giver of Life. Hear our cries as we call out to you in hope.

People: **O God, we place our hope in you.**

Fr. Michael: We anxiously hope for the joy which you alone can bring to us. Come Lord Jesus....Maranatha!

THE FIRST CANDLE, THE CANDLE OF HOPE, IS LIT (Jerusalem Greer, Good News Gardens, The Episcopal Church of the United States 2023)

Fr. Michael: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Sacred soil below us, sacred sky above us; sacred water beside us, sacred breathe within us; sacred Spirit before us, Creator God make us new. And now, as people called, and people gathered around sacred fire and sacred hope, we pray,

People: **Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration**

**of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: Together, we say three times,

People: **Holy God, holy and mighty; holy immortal one, have mercy on us.**

Fr. Michael: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, now in this time of our mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility, so that on the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and forever. All: **Amen**

Reader: A reading from the Prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 9:1-7) Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan— The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: This Advent, we hope and pray for JOY as we journey together; Sight for the blind and HEALING for the sick; FREEDOM for the prisoners and GOOD NEWS for the poor. Release the oppressed with JUSTICE for all and LOVE for one another. And the coming of God's topsy-turvy, inside out, upside down Kingdom.

All: **Amen**

Reader: Our psalm for this new day, new year is from Psalm 80(Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19) Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim. In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us. Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

All: **Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

Reader: O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your

people? You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

All: **Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

Reader: You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn. Restore us, O God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

All: **Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

Reader: Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, the son of man you have made so strong for yourself. And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

All: **Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.**

Reader: A reading from Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1: 3-9)  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind - just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Word of the Lord

People: **Thanks be to God**

Reader: Holy God of peace, we seek your peace in these darkened days. We seek a calm within, yes, and an absence of conflict between peoples and nations. But more deeply, we seek your SHALOM – the deep and abiding peace that will come only through the justice of your kingdom.

All: **Amen** (Joanna Harader, Spacious Faith website)

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour according to the Blessed St. Mark (St. Mark 13:24-37)

People: **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Fr. Michael: Jesus said, "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass

away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

This is the very Gospel of Christ.

People: **Thanks to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Homily

Today, we enter the sacred season of Advent, the time when the Church is called to “prepare the way of the Lord” and to prayerfully think of the new year of the Christian calendar. It is a time for reflection on the past, consideration of the present and anticipation for the future. It is also a time when we as individual followers of The Way pause from the business of our lives to spend and, to quote St. Mark, find “a quiet and lonely place” where we can simply sit and be in the presence of God.

Our Advent time begins with the words of Isaiah which have been borne across millenia by the hearts and voices of generations who seek the Lord. Like all prophetic writings, these words are rooted in real history and the lives of real people. While there may have been at least three authors of the Prophecies of Isaiah, we do know that a prophet by that name was living in the middle of the eighth-century BCE and that he spent a great deal of his time referring to the political realities of his day. In a time when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were the “punching bags” of their neighbours, Isaiah gives hope to his people who are “walking in darkness”, filled with fear and uncertainty because they do not sense the presence of the Lord in their midst. To many, Yahweh has retreated up the mountain and sits there, seemingly either the author of the misfortunes being visited upon the people or being an indifferent deity who is leaving the people up to their own devices. It is in the heart of that darkness that Isaiah declares that there is light. Isaiah foretells of the defeat of the bearers of the darkness and to those who call out in the wilderness of their lives, “O Lord, where are you?”, the prophet declares, “to us a child is born, for us a son is given.” This is a refinement of what Isaiah declared earlier when he said, “A virgin will be with child and bear a son and will call him Emmanuel (God is with us)”.

The psalm for this new day shares the theme of light breaking through darkness, as the poet says, “Restore us, O Lord, let your face shine”. As I read these words, I am drawn back to the creation story in Genesis in which the author says, “Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.” I have this image of God gazing through the darkness, chasing the shadows to the very edges of the universe and then smiling the smile of the ages roaring with delight, “This is good.” For me, my God has a face which is a reflection of the brilliance of light of creation, offering me hope in dark times and the sound of laughter in the midst of tears.

This is reflected in Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he speaks to them of the constancy of their faith – no matter how dark and treacherous life seems, he says, the Lord is faithful to those who love him and call upon his name. Paul is obviously very supportive of the community because of its witness to the ministry and teachings of the Carpenter King: he is so sure of his sisters and brothers that he calls them “sanctified and called to be holy” and knows that the faithfulness of the people is surpassed only by the faithfulness of God towards his beloved ones. God's loyalty and faithfulness, Paul believes, will last beyond the end of time and the “adventus” of the Lord when he comes to bring in all its fulness and power the peaceable kingdom of His Father. Once again, the theme begun today by Isaiah finds its reflection in Paul's musings to and about this fellowship of faithful pilgrims of and on The Way.

The gospel for this morning is a part of what is called “the little apocalypse” – it is Mark's reflection on the prelude to the Day of Promise – the day when the Lord shall return and restore the world. Scholars believe this thirteenth chapter was written around 70 CE, some forty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus and that the “abomination of desolation which stands where it ought not to be” refers to a statue of the Roman Emperor which was placed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. This outraged the population and a rebellion erupted which had as its bottom line the removal of the Romans from the land. Rome retaliated by laying siege to and eventually destroying the “golden city on the hill” – Mark uses this catastrophic event as a palette for him to draw the future of hope and joy which will come when the Lord returns. Mark calls his fellow “Christians” to be ever vigilant, for the timing of the “Kingdom coming” is known only to God and, like the bridesmaids in the gospel from a few weeks ago, warns and reminds his community to always have their lamps at the ready when, to quote Jesus in Matthew: “at midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here is the Bridegroom – come and meet him’...The maidens who were ready went into the banquet with him and the door was shut. Later, the other maidens came, the ones who had not been prepared: ‘Sir, sir’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’. But he replied, ‘I do not know you’. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day nor the hour.” So, Advent is a time for us to reflect on how “prepared” we are as individuals and as a community to be ready for whenever Jesus returns as he has promised he will. How will he know we are ready for him?

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION THIS WEEK:

1. While this may be a painful thing to do, think about some moment in your life when all you saw and felt was darkness. In honest reflection, where was God to you in the swirl of hurt and pain which threatened your life, your hope? If he seemed absent, where is God now for you? If things have changed, how did they change?
2. How will the Lord know that you are preparing his way in your life?
3. How will the Lord know that the faith community to which you belong is preparing the way of the Lord?

4. St. James, writing to the Church as it moved outwards from Jerusalem into the darkening word said, "Do not merely be hearers of the word; be doers of the same". If Jesus was to tap you on the shoulder today and ask if you have been preparing his way, how would you answer him?

Fr. Michael: In the season of waiting and hoping and preparing, we remind ourselves of who we wait for. Our faith is rooted in Jesus the Light of the World and so we are able to declare,

**All: I believe in one God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Reader: Into our troubles and weaknesses, into the barren places of our souls, Come Lord,

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: Into the war-torn and the refugee, into those who live in the midst of conflict and the heart of darkness, remembering especially the peoples of Ukraine, Palestine, Israel and wherever humanity's inhumanity is manifesting itself, come Lord:

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: Into the homeless and the unemployed, into those who feel abandoned, especially those separated from their families through distance or history, come Lord:

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: In the poor and the starving, into those who are depressed and those who live in conditions of abuse; for the social networks that support the marginalized, praying at this time for the work of all churches, synagogues, temples and mosques that serve the lost and especially for our own diocese from whom we remember this day Shane, Anne, Linda; and the Parish of South Dundas and The Reverend Mark Lewis. We pray for The Diocese of Jerusalem and Archbishop Hosam Naoum and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Bishop Susan Johnson and Bishop Michael Pryse, come Lord,

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: Into the lives of loved ones, into the lives of those from whom we are estranged, come Lord:

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: Into our joys and our celebrations, into our work and our achievements, into our retirements and rest, in our service of work and prayer, remembering at this time particularly Liesa, Marjorie, Beth, Randy, Howard, Irene, Richard, Deb, Leonard,

Louise, Sarah, Jeanette, Cheryl, Zachariah and those who are known to you alone., come Lord:

People: **Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.**

Reader: O Christ, we long for your coming. Hasten that day when those who seek you in every nation will come from east and west, from north and south and sit together at the table of your kingdom. Hasten the day when your peaceable kingdom will come in all its glory and when suffering, pain, sickness, oppression and death will be overcome forever. Hasten the day when we will be resurrected as a great multicultural family and live in peace, harmony, joy and love together in your kingdom.

All: **Amen** (Christine Sine Godspace website)

Fr. Michael: We don't know when Jesus will return and we are told not to worry about the timing. But we do know when we do wrong, when we hurt others, when we disappoint God. But God will change our sins into acts of mercy and our failures into moments of faith. So, together we pray.,

People: **In this season of sales, shopping and stress, God of Light, we confess how easy it is to slip off your paths. We can become so focused on having a good time that we forget to take the time to do good for others. We easily slip into Santa suits but find Jesus an uncomfortable fit for our lives. We find ourselves strangely jealous over the gifts others receive and yet we have trouble accepting the gifts of peace and serenity you hand out so freely. Forgive us, Breath of Salvation. By your mercy, we can once again walk the street of your kingdom, being alert for the signs of your grace and hope in our midst. Teach us your ways of peace and reconciliation so that we may truly live as disciples of our Lord Jesus.**

Fr. Michael: This is the good news: you will be swept away in the waters of mercy with salvation carrying you home to God's heart. Peace, serenity, healing, hope – these gifts, and more, are ours in this Advent season of watching and waiting. This is the blessing of God: Father, Son and Spirit.

All: **Amen**

And the peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

**WE SHARE THE SHALOM OF GOD WITH ONE ANOTHER**

Fr. Michael: God of love and power, your Word stirs within us the expectation of the coming of your Son. Accept all that we offer you this day, and sustain us with your promise of eternal life; we ask this in the name of Jesus.

All: **Amen.**

Fr. Michael: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Fr. Michael: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Fr. Michael: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Fr. Michael: We give you thanks and praise, almighty God, through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. He is your living Word, through whom you have created all things. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh of the Virgin Mary and shared our human nature. He lived and died as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. In fulfilment of your will he stretched out his hands in suffering, to bring release to those who place their hope in you; and so he won for you a holy people. He chose to bear our griefs and sorrows, and to give up his life on the cross, that he might shatter the chains of evil and death, and banish the darkness of sin and despair. By his resurrection he brings us into the light of your presence. Now with all creation we raise our voices to proclaim the glory of your name.

All: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Fr. Michael: Holy and gracious God, accept our praise, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; who on the night he was handed over to suffering and death, took bread and gave you thanks, saying, "Take, and eat: this is my body which is broken for you." In the same way he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. When you do this, you do it in memory of me. Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we offer you this bread and this cup, giving thanks that you have made us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy Church. Gather into one all who share in these sacred mysteries, filling them with the Holy Spirit and confirming their faith in the truth, that together we may praise you and give you glory through your Servant, Jesus Christ. All glory and honour are yours, Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, now and for ever.

All: **Amen**

Fr. Michael: And now, as Jesus has gifted to his Church, we pray as his family,

People: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: "I am the bread of life says the Lord. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry; whoever believes in me will never thirst."

People: **Taste and see that the Lord is good: happy are they who trust in him!**

Fr. Michael: The gifts of God for all the children of God.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**WE SHARE THE GIFTS OF LIFE AND HOPE TOGETHER**

Fr. Michael: God for whom we wait, who has fed us with the bread of eternal life. Keep us ever watchful so that we may be ready to stand before the Son of Man. This we ask in Jesus' blessed name.

All: **Amen**

All: **Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fr. Michael: So now we leave this space of worship and while so much of the road ahead us uncertain, the path changing constantly, we know that there are some things that are solid and as sure as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads. We know that GOD IS LOVE, we know that CHRIST'S LIGHT ENDURES, we know THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THERE, found in the spaces between all things, closer to us than our next breath, binding us to one another until we meet again. And the overwhelming love of God: Father, Son and Spirit surround us and keep us this week and until the very end of the ages.

All: **Amen**

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