

1st Sunday of Advent - Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

It is the first Sunday of Advent and it is time for the Christmas blues. I overheard a woman talking in the checkout line this week, and she said, “You know, I am not sure I have the strength to face the holidays this year.”

Now children never feel this way. Children are always excited about Christmas. On behalf of the adults here I would like to thank the children for keeping our spirits up.

But for those of us who have to plan, who have to shop, who have to organize, who have to cook, the upcoming weeks can appear as a burden.

I also know many people will face the holidays this year with dread, because they have experienced a loss in their lives. The thought of gathering together with family and friends with someone missing is a burden which at times seems too heavy to carry.

We know that the demand for professional counseling goes up this time of year. And unfortunately suicide rates spike. So, despite the cheery lights that we see on houses as we drive at night and the music and the holly that surrounds us when we walk into the mall, many of us in this season can feel kind of blue.

This is why today’s gospel is so important. The powerful signs in the gospel are meant to shake us out of the reservations we may have about the upcoming weeks.

The roaring of the seas and the turmoil in the heavens are not meant to frighten us but to encourage us. These signs in the sky are the Bible’s way of saying that our God is powerful and our God is active.

They tell us that God is capable of acting at any time and most especially during this time. And when God acts, there is peace and there is joy.

So, we have every reason to believe that God will act powerfully in our lives during the upcoming weeks. Remembering that and believing that can dispel the Christmas blues.

You see, the focus of this season is not all the work we have to do but the work that God is going to do. The real importance of these upcoming weeks is not our responsibilities but God's grace.

So, our stance is to wait in hope for what God will do. God can touch us with a kindness that we did not expect or a healing we did not imagine.

We could be surprised with joy as we turn the next corner and such a gift can more than compensate for all the work that this season entails.

We are to wait in hope for a God who will stand with us in our loss. We can be blessed by a friend who knows our pain and can comfort us without the need of words. We can find the strength to celebrate a family meal, leaving with more thanksgiving and gratitude for what we have than depression over what we have lost.

We wait in hope for God to act. We believe that God will do so. This is how to shake off the Christmas blues. Despite all of the work we must do, despite the losses that we need to carry, our God is a God who loves us. We are sons and daughters who God will not forget. So, we stand erect and lift our heads, believing that God's action is at hand.

Advent has begun. AMEN.