

Pastor T.C. Arnold - 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity (Church-Year Service) - August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
Pastor B.J. Froiland - Sermon for Trinity 12 – Micah 5:2-5a, Mark 1:9-15, and Matthew 28:1-7

Today, we embark on a journey through the church year. The church year tells the greatest story ever told. It tells us the life of Jesus. But more than that, the church year draws us into His life and makes us participants in His eternal life. Jesus' story becomes our story. As the seasons of the church year unfold, we receive God's peace in our time.

### **Advent**

Advent is the first season of the church year. The name comes from a Latin word which means, "Coming." Or more specifically for us, "God is coming." The season of Advent reminds us that God came to us 2,000 years ago, is present with us in our day, and He will come again on the Last Day.

The Advent season focuses on the various advents of our Lord Himself: past, present, and future. It shows what God did, is doing, and will do for us. Advent shares with us the reason why Jesus came: to save sinners. Christ's entrance into Jerusalem reminds us that He came into the flesh for us: to suffer and die for our sins. Advent tells us of the future calamities which will overtake the world when Christ returns in the end times. A word of certain comfort and encouragement is proclaimed for us also: "your redemption is drawing near." For those baptized into His Name, the coming of Christ to judge the world is not a source of fear, but rather of hope in the certain promise of eternal life. Advent tells of John the Baptizer, who was the great forerunner before the Christ, and who reminds us of the faithful preachers of today. John sent his disciples to Jesus. His sending was consistent with His office as preacher. As true preachers always direct people to Jesus as the forgiver of sins, so Pastor Arnold and myself stop at nothing to fulfill this mighty task today. John the Baptizer said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" That is God's Advent answer to our sin. The death of the Lamb, God's only Son, is a costly answer, but it is the only answer.

Advent can be seen as a season of repentance, but never a season without the certainty of God's mercy and forgiveness. No better summation of this can be given than in Paul Gerhardt's epic Advent hymn, "O Lord, How shall I meet You?" Especially v. 3

"I lay in fetters groaning; You came to set me free.

I stood, my shame bemoaning; You came to honor me.

A glorious crown You give me, A treasure safe on high

That will not fail or leave me As earthly riches fly." LSB 334:3

### **Christmas**

We could say that there are two Christmases that vie for our allegiance: the Christmas of our society and the Christmas of the church. For our society, Christmas is a time of nostalgia for the innocence of childhood and so much more. The Christmas of faith also remembers a time of innocence: Eden and a world created in beauty, perfection and harmony. A promise of renewal is made for us at Bethlehem and Christmas is the season to celebrate the gift that brings hope into a world of brokenness.

The Church celebrates the mystery of salvation revealed in Christ's birth, rather than the birthday itself. The crib in Bethlehem and the carols we sing about a lovely Baby are truly a gift for our faith. Yet we celebrate more than a human feeling. We celebrate the mystery of God becoming human in Christ who is both our King and our Servant. So, in this Season of Christmas, the liturgy of the church must witness to both the lowly son of man and the glorious Son of God who holds the cosmos in His hands.

The name of the Festival, Christmas, means “Christ Mass”, that is the liturgy (order of Service) celebrated on the day when Christ came among us as one of us. Our cultural Christmas begins during Advent and is fairly well exhausted by December 25<sup>th</sup>. But for the Church Christmas starts with the Nativity of our Lord and goes the “twelve days of Christmas” to Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Celebrate Christmas at and during Christmas. This season is glorious as now the “Advent of our King” is truly before our very eyes – the King of all Kings is born in a lowly manger in a small little town to a humble mother. He has come, in this Season, to soon accomplish the work that must be done on the cross for you. What a blessed celebration for the Church.

### **Epiphany**

“Epiphany” comes from the Greek word which means “manifestation.” To “manifest” means to “reveal.” And to “reveal” means to “show.” God shows me Himself in the season of Epiphany. So just how does God show Himself to us during this season?

God reveals Himself in the person of Jesus. During Epiphany we hear of God’s own Son who turned water into wine. As a boy, He taught Israel’s greatest teachers in the temple. He was baptized by John in the Jordan River to cleanse us of our sins. The season of Epiphany begins on January 6<sup>th</sup>, when the church celebrates the story of the wise men who were guided by the brightness of a star and found the even brighter Son. This season ends with the Transfiguration, when the exceeding brightness of our Lord was revealed to His disciples. Epiphany reveals God’s shining brightness to us today. The prophet Isaiah said, “Thy light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” St. John said, “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” God reveals Himself as so large, so bright, in the beauty of His holiness. But that’s the problem: compared to Him, we are so small, so ugly, so sinful that we can’t endure the light. We prefer darkness, where our sins can remain hidden. We don’t come out and say anything about what we’re doing. We fool ourselves into thinking that we not even in the dark. And the best part of the trick is that we act as if the darkness weren’t really darkness. That sin is not really sin. We prefer the darkness, but no man can live without the Light.

So there we stand. In the brightness and glory of God. We’re alone and bare. How hard it is to turn to the Light! Our egos clutch and tug to hold us back. But God even removes them. And in Epiphany, we’re left alone with God. Yet what we’ve dreaded is not dreadful at all, because the same Word that stripped us bare is the same word that clothes us in bright righteousness and God’s holiness. We walk in the light even as He is light. God’s forgiveness through Christ shines forth on us during Epiphany. In Jesus, we stand in God’s light with no shame.

### **Lent**

The word “Lent” has its origin in the same root as one of the German words for “spring,” Lenz. As nature awakens from the death of winter, so the Christian finds newness of life in Christ. During this Season there is time to reflect on discipline as described in repentance and prayer. Even things like fasting have been a part of personal routines. Lent is a 40 day journey toward a very specific goal. That goal is the annual celebration of our Lord’s death and resurrection to life.

This season has its origins in baptism. Adults underwent catechesis, that is, teaching in the faith, during this season. They would be baptized and received into the community of faith on the Easter Vigil (Saturday before Easter). During this time they would live lives of discipline, repentance and prayer.

Sometimes we think that Lent is covered by a pall of gloom. Our sins are great for sure, but the outcome of our Lenten preparations is not in doubt. His promises are sure as He calls us in confidence for the certain triumph of Christ in us. In our baptisms we live a life in process of dying and rising again by repentance and forgiveness. Baptism for the Christian is not just an event but a life-long presence that does not end until we enter the grave – but then resurrected to life by a Lord who would take our life into His own on Good Friday. So to sum up, Lent is not an extended Holy

Week of being somber and gloomy. It's about living in the life of Baptism. Lent points the Christian to and seeks to prepare her or him to the Vigil of Easter and so for the Fifty days of Easter.

### **Easter**

Easter is the center and heart of the entire church year. The Resurrection of our Lord was what Old Testament saints awaited and what New Testament saints celebrate. The very word "Easter" is a reference to the sun that rises in the East, which is a picture of Son who rose from the dead that glorious morning. The word "Sunday" is even rooted in the resurrection reality: the rising of the God's Son on this day marked the beginning and core of Christian worship. The early faithful considered each Sunday a 'little Easter' and so we also continually celebrate Christ's Resurrection in the sure and certain hope of our own.

Naysayers then and now would doubt the Resurrection because it's beyond human experience for a dead body to raise to life. "Where is the proof?" they say. The Law required 2 or 3 witnesses to prove a fact. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John were the first witnesses. A week later the twelve saw the resurrected Christ. Paul said that more than 500 could be called as witnesses to the Resurrection. It was Christ who died, and it was Christ who rose. That means One died for all and rose for all, for when God acted in Christ, He acted for the entire world; He was reconciling the world to Himself. Therefore, the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead stand and fall together. To affirm the one is to affirm the other, and to deny the one is to deny the other. At Easter, God's work in Christ covers our corruption with incorruption, our disfigurement with glory, our weakness with strength, our sins with righteousness. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and that means you. At Easter, God has triumphed over the sin of man and that is the sure and solid basis of our triumph over death. Sin made death strong; sin was death's sting. But now, because of Christ's Resurrection, we sing, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?"

Easter celebrates the Christ who is risen from the dead. The greatest deed of God is done, and cannot be undone. Divine life triumphs and you live in the Living God.

### **Trinity**

For this season there is no progressive or orderly development of a common subject or general theme. The purpose, more than anything, is to offer the Church minor Easter celebrations on each of the Lord's Day. Teaching is a common characteristic of this regular, non-festival Season. Love for neighbor is a theme. Faith is a theme. Hope is even a theme we hear during this Season which lasts up to twenty-seven weeks.

The other Seasons we just heard about present the life of Christ Jesus as the focal point of our faith. The Trinity Season takes Christ's teaching – His Words – His Works, all into account. We hear the parables of the Lord during the Trinity Season and we hear about Jesus healing diseased bodies. All of this is to illustrate the gracious effects of the Means of Grace, which is the deepest meaning and purpose of these accounts.

From the hopeful coming of Jesus, to His birth – to the beginning of His public ministry, and to the time reflection, repentance and prayer – to glorious resurrection to the focus on our Lord's ministry among the people in many ways, the Seasons of the Church-year give us a clear view on how God carried it all out for you. Jesus is at the center of it all – His life, His ministry. Every year we do it all over again. Our Savior never changes, and neither does our Lord's love for you. He keeps on giving you what you need for life. Jesus "keeps on" being the reason for the Seasons – from Advent through Trinity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen