

ADVENT I – 2009
SERMON-CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBURG
COLLECT FOR ADVENT-BCP P90
ROMANS 13.8 MATTHEW 11.1



WACHET AUF...WAKE UP...! JOLTING COUNSEL TAKEN STRAIGHT FROM TODAY'S EPISTLE AND OFTEN APPLIED DIRECTLY TO ME IN THE PROCESS OF GROWING UP. PONDERING THIS MANY YEARS LATER I CONCLUDED THIS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN A CONSPIRACY BETWEEN GOD, ST PAUL, PARENTS AND SEVERAL TEACHERS.

ADVENT SUNDAY inevitably brings about reconsideration of that portion of today's Epistle...frequently augmented by the singing Bach's hymn of the same name. Effectiveness of the whole scheme is yet to be determined. Unless I miss my guess, some of you may relate to this as well...!

Today commences the Church New Year. As with any beginning, being AWAKE to the reality of a new beginning is beneficial.

For most, just the reality that Christmas is 26 days from tomorrow is an AWAKENING jolt...St Paul's Epistle teaches us there is lot more to than just the physical side...it's high time, says he, to consider the spiritual realities of life as well...

Relax...for when you cross that bridge and consider things in their proper context, life gets easier...not harder...

Advent calls upon us to first consider LAST THINGS...first! Consider carefully the Advent Collect used every day until Christmas...

GOD HELP US THROW AWAY THE WORKS OF DARKNESS...THINGS WE DON'T ANYONE TO KNOW ABOUT, AND DO THINGS WE WANT TO BE SEEN, NOW IN THIS LIFE IN WHICH JESUS, YOUR SON, CAME TO BE WITH US AS A HUMAN BEING; SO THAT ON THE LAST DAY WHEN HE IS COMING AGAIN TO JUDGE BOTH THOSE ALIVE AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED, WE MAY BE READY AND ABLE TO BE WITH YOU IN HEAVEN FOREVER.

The Collect erases any doubt about what we are to do...get ready by getting things in order. Meditate upon that during

Advent...ORDER AND READINESS...your own, not someone else's.

If the concept of Advent is "readiness" and this is a beginning, what's the point about LAST THINGS FIRST?

The Collect speaks to the four final things that Advent calls us to consider. These are death, judgment, heaven and hell. We don't find it very comforting and we'd prefer not to think about it, but death is something we have seen and shall all face. Heaven is something for which we all hope. Judgment is something we shall all face and Hell is the alternative to the attainment of heaven and everlasting life.

Getting ready is not really complicated at all. The Epistle lays out in pragmatic terms what we're to do with our lives and that compels the physical preparations for Christmas...if we spend time doing what St. Paul identifies as the critical points we find ourselves pretty naturally prepared on all fronts. Fail to follow the advice and we'll be ill prepared and in a pretty messy state.

The Epistle speaks directly to our preparation what is today's Gospel about? Jesus is the revealed and acknowledged King who showed up was not pleased with the mess that the moneychangers and pigeon peddlers had made of God's Temple. One can readily conclude that the moneychangers were not exactly comfortable by the time he left!

There's good reason to believe he'd be equally displeased to show up and find people still acting like moneychangers. Advent tells us to be ready when the King arrives...our house and life should be in order.

Advent is a penitential time...a time when the Church calls us to reconsider our personal readiness. Spend at least a few moments each day of the season in prayer along with your physical preparations. Make particular note of the BCP instructions...*SAY THIS PRAYER EVERY DAY, UNTIL CHRISTMAS.*

