

## **Advent: HOPE**

November 29, 2020 - First Sunday in Advent

SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 64:1-9 and Hebrews 4:11-16

GOLDEN VERSE: *O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.* Isaiah 64:1

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent Sunday when we think of the coming of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem, and also the coming again of Jesus at the end of time to judge the world. I want to suggest that, during this Advent, we should be longing for the coming of Jesus into Canadian's hearts, to turn our nation back to God. We should pray to the Lord to create a spiritual awakening amongst our nation and the whole world. May some people wake up and start to awake those who spiritually are sleeping. Last Sunday, God told us that we, as His children, should not sleep as others. Last Sunday, at the end of the sermon, we promised to God that from now we would like to be more faithful watchmen, taking the responsibility to awaken people around us.

This morning, we heard a deeply heartfelt prayer from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. He was longing for God to come and stir up His people's hearts. Asking God to come to us and to stir up our hearts, our Canadian nation's heart, is one of the most important preparations we can make to be ready for the celebration of Christmas, the birth of Jesus.

In this sermon, we will face the present, see what we should do now, and see what God does now.

### **1. Facing the present**

The prophet Isaiah lived in a time when generations had turned from the living God to all sorts of other religions. And, for this, Isaiah felt like God stepped far away from his nation. "*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth*" (verse 5). "*There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you*" (verse 7). They didn't even have the sense anymore to go looking for God or calling out to God. For this, God could no longer bless what Israel was doing. God seemed so far away, as if God was hiding up somewhere behind the clouds.

There are two types of people: one says, "Lord, Thy will be done." The other says, "MY will be done." To this second person, God says, "Ok, human, YOUR will be done, but take the consequences."

Until February 2020, our world was flourishing and our economy were about to reach the sky. We did not realize that we all abandoned God, chasing our own dreams and values. And this year God said, “Enough.”

Witnessing the crashing economy, and the suffering people around the world, these days we have a feeling that God turned away from our world. God, who is ignored and neglected, is hiding His face in His palms and suffers with us. God is crying because of the way He is treated here in Canada, in our school system, law system, and even in our Christian hearts.

Many of us had a feeling that, these months. the abandoned God has shaken the mountains and the whole earth around us to wake us up. It seems silly that for this situation we are still blaming a small, invisible virus, and we have a hard time recognizing, that God allowed all this to crash our economy and our world, in which He, God, the Creator is forgotten.

I hear often that if this pandemic will continue, our world economy will be totally crashed. Please recognize that, in this situation, these ruins are the outcome of our ungodly behaviour.

## **2. What should we do now?**

My main concern is not about our Government, schools, and the law system. My first concern is about our Christian sisters and brothers, who are worshipping God ONLY on Sundays, or not even on Sundays. My main concern is about our hearts, from where we abandoned Christ. My main concern is that we are still more interested in our own small daily plans than to recognize, that by being far away from God, we are destroying ourselves, our relationships, and our world. For decades, God was forced more and more to leave our schools and our whole society. And God said, “Enough.” These days, God is locking us down. God is closing many stores and forcing families to gather around the Christmas tree and to wait for Him, to rend the heaven and to come down. He does not want us to tremble before Him, but to rejoice IN Him.

We need to take time to slow down and listen to our hearts and listen to God. We have to humble ourselves and recognize that we were forcing God to destroy our world, in order to wake us up.

We have to ask Him with a humble heart, “Yet, You, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter” as we were singing. *“We are the work of your*

*hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord. Do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all Your people” (verses 8- 9).*

I am encouraging all of us dear beloved, not to pray these prayers with a devastated heart, but remember that every time, when God’s people repented to the Lord with their whole heart, mind, and spirit, the Lord returned to them. We are called not just to keep our church alive, but also to turn the world back to the Creator.

### **3. Now let us see what God does.**

In verse 3, Isaiah reminded himself of God’s mighty deeds in the past: “*you did awesome things.*” God did awesome things when He gave His people the Ten Commandments and when He brought them out from Egypt. The Lord acted graciously when He forgave King David. It is true, that God abandoned His people and allowed Babylon to take His people in exile, just because they turned their backs to God. But after they humbled themselves, after they confessed their sins, when they asked for forgiveness, and when they committed themselves to serve the Lord faithfully again, the Lord was ready to bring His people back from Babylon, from their exile to their own land, and gave them a new opportunity to rebuild their economy.

Please notice, that during history, when God abandoned His people, He had a good reason to do so. God was forced out from their midst, and God had no other chance - either to leave or to rend the heavens. But when the people humbled themselves and repented, God was ready to reconcile.

Please notice that, if we repent and we ask for forgiveness, God will return to us. God will embrace us again because HE IS OUR father and WE ARE HIS CHILDREN. He can hear us as we cry out and He can see us as we approach Him with our confession. God would intervene to save us.

In verse 4, the original Hebrew text there is a wonderful message, saying: This is how a loving Father is acting. Let’s recall for a moment the story of the Prodigal Son. The son left the father’s home and spent all his inheritance, sliding deeper and deeper in the slimy pit. However, his father was waiting for him every day at the end of the driveway, hoping that one day his son will return. This is how a loving father acts.

This is how, today, God is waiting for you and for me, with the hope that you and I and our nation, our country Canada, will return to Him. God is expecting our return and is waiting for us with open arms to embrace us.

If we pray for forgiveness, our Heavenly Father will not give up on us. We are His children. His love is much stronger than ours. He is committed to us. The Lord is fully capable of shaping and molding us. He is the potter, we are the clay. He is able to restore us in His image. Please don't give up on prayers until He answers.

*“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses ... Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Come and let us call on God's name during this Advent. Let us ask the Lord to come and shake our land and wake us up. May we all repent from our nation's sins and call on God to move again in Canada.

Please allow yourself to be clay shaped by the Potter. We have to let God shape us into what He needs us to be. Put your trust in God that He will act. If you let the Potter shape you, He will use you for something amazing.

Jesus did everything for our salvation. He left His heavenly glory. He became a vulnerable child and He lived amongst us. The Lord Jesus Christ will do everything for you, for me, and for all His followers to keep us safe.

If you might have a feeling that your life is ruined, please remember that there is **SOMEBODY** who will never leave you alone, who rendered the heaven and came down into this earth to be very close to you. God is a God who works for those who wait for Him. He is coming closer to our lives today again and, with Jesus, we can rebuild our world. We cannot manufacture that on our own. We need God to save us.

I am sure we have all started thinking about getting ready for Christmas. For the first time in my life, I already wrapped the gifts I prepared for my loved ones. This week, we decorated our home. But there is one thing we need above all. We need God in our lives. I hope we all feel that need. Let us pray with Isaiah: *“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down?”* In Advent, we are waiting for Jesus, with whom we can rebuild our whole lives. Amen