



Bible Study * First Sunday in Advent Year B

St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes

December 3, 2017
Volume 2 Issue 1

“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.” MARK 13:33, NABRE

Reading I: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

What are you looking for? Are you looking for love? The readings for the Advent season begin with the continuation of the images of the final judgment given in the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time. Therefore, the climax of the teachings on the final judgment comes on the First Sunday in Advent. The following three Sundays of Advent focus on preparatory themes for the celebration of the coming of Christmas and the first coming of the Messiah.

This is the first in a series of four Bible Study sessions for the season of advent. The overall theme is, **“What are you looking for?”** Each week a new object of waiting and searching will be discussed. During the First Week of Advent, we embrace the sense of waiting and searching for that most elusive of treasures, **love**.



You are the potter. We are the clay. We are the works of your hands. The product of your love.

The first reading is taken from “Third Isaiah” in which Israel seeks to return the protection of God’s love for them. It expresses the great anxiety and expectation of pious Jews for the coming of Yahweh among them. Note the repentant mood. They are not passively waiting, but are actively searching their souls for a place for Yahweh to return. They recognize and repent of their infidelity (vv. 16-19). They realize the holy supremacy of God (64:2-7).

This prayer for the return of God’s love demonstrates their recognition of the greatness of their offenses and the power of God. The reference to polluted rags and guilt captures the mood of total submission that is necessary for one seeking God’s forgiveness. It is a prayer for the return of God’s favor. They called God Father, and submitted to His will, like clay submits to a potter. These verses show that if we are looking for love we must first give love. Are you looking for love? **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** If you were God, how would you react to this prayer of Israel? Why?

ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Isaiah was one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. He was God’s mouthpiece who spoke to the people of Judah during the time when the northern tribes were taken into exile by Assyria around 722 B.C. They never returned from that exile. Yet he preached the glorious hope of the Messianic Age for those who would repent and remain faithful to God.

Because he was so prominent among God’s prophets, he had many followers who continued his preaching and added to his writings. These writings are referred to as Second and Third Isaiah. In this Sunday’s reading from Third Isaiah, he prays that God would have mercy and come down among them. This prayer was answered with the incarnation, the birth of Jesus the Christ to Mary and Joseph who were of the tribe of Judah.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

What are you looking for? Are you looking for love? Corinth at the time of St. Paul was a Roman Colony, prosperous and notorious for immorality. Many looked for love in all the wrong places. But to the Corinthian Christians, St. Paul brings grace (Greek - **Caris**) and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ. His greeting reflects the love he had for them and the love that the Corinthians should demonstrate (vv. 1-3). He was impressed with the fervor of the Corinthian Christians.

In this letter which he probably wrote from Ephesus around 57 A.D., St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that despite all their present knowledge, they are still waiting for the final revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He assures them that God loves them enough to be faithful to them. They must love Him enough to join the fellowship of fidelity with Jesus the Christ. (vv. 8-9). Though they were given wisdom, they must love God’s wisdom more than their own. To find love they must give love. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What do you find encouraging about this passage?

Bible Study * First Sunday in Advent Year B

Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

What are you looking for? Are you looking for love? Love is one of the most discussed and studied subject in the world. C. S. Lewis, in his work, *Mere Christianity* writes: "Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor, act as if you do. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you love someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less." The point is that to find love, we must give love. Love is a verb that requires action. To watch or be vigilant can be motivated by fear and anxiety, but it can also be motivated by love. As Christians, if we love God we will not be anxious but will watch and wait for Him by loving Him enough to love our neighbor.

Chapter 13 of Mark's Gospel concerns the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Consequently, there is some overlap from last Sunday's theme and the theme for this Sunday. In this chapter, Christ gives some signs of this horrific event (v. 14). The disciples are exhorted to **watch** for these signs. But while watching, what is their emotional state? Is it fear, because the date and the hour of the end of the world is a secret known only to God (v. 32)? Verse 34 teaches that it should not be fear that motivates vigilance, but love.

A man traveling will not leave his possessions with someone whom he does not trust (see 13:34 Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27). Trust is the beginning of love. Note that the verse 34 says that those left behind are entrusted each according to the ability. Either the owner knows the ability of each one of his servants, or he loves them enough to not give them more than they can manage. The servants, on the other hand, love the employer enough to manage what is them him properly. They watch, not because of infidelity and laziness. The servants watch out of love or duty to their employer to properly administer those things left in their care.

Simultaneous with the command to watch is to love. When we love others enough to serve them faithfully, we love God as well. When care for others with love and compassion, we love God as well. Therefore, we do not "watch" for the end of the world. Rather, we "watch" how we love and treat each other. Watch! DISCUSSION QUESTION: What does it mean to wait patiently? What motivates you to be patient?

Pray About It.

Monday

Read 1 John 4:7. Love is Patient. Today place yourself last. Allow others to go ahead of you.

Tuesday

Love is kind. Perform four acts of kindness to total strangers.

Wednesday

Read Mark 13:33-37. Watch for opportunities to show love to others then take the opportunity.

Thursday

Read 1 Col. 3:16. Love is grateful. Thank God for all He has done for you.

Friday

As a sign of your love for Jesus Christ and your neighbor, attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

The Catholic Catechism Teaches that God is love.

218 In the course of its history, Israel was able to discover that God had only one reason to reveal himself to them, a single motive for choosing them from among all peoples as his special possession: his sheer gratuitous love. And thanks to the prophets Israel understood that it was again out of love that God never stopped saving them and pardoning their unfaithfulness and sins.

219 God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and will extend to his most precious gift: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."

Resources: The Gospel of Mark, Mary Healy, Baker Academic Grand Rapids, Mi. pp 271-273; 1 Corinthians, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Ignatius Press 2010. San Francisco. CA. pp 1106-1107; <http://www.liturgy.slu.edu/1AdvB120317/theword.html> 57; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic>; C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, http://www.homileticonline.com/subscriber/illustration_search.asp?item_topic_id=887

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017