

Canon Jack E. Lindquist
St. Paul's Cathedral
Advent I (Nov. 29), 2009

Homily: "Here Comes Christ!"

LORD JESUS CHRIST: YOU ARE THE RISEN AND ASCENDED RULER OF THE WORLD. HELP US TO LIVE EACH DAY LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR GLORIOUS RETURN. AMEN.

"Strange things happening to the sun, the moon and the stars.... On earth, whole nations in despair, afraid of the roar of the sea and the raging tides.... People fainting from fear as they wait for what is coming.... The powers in space driven from their courses.... THEN the appearing of the Son of Man, coming in a cloud with great power and glory..... Stand up! Raise your heads! Your salvation is near!".... Here comes Christ!

Wow! It's all a bit too much for us, isn't it, this early, this original Christian message? I mean, we contemporary American Christians by and large just don't think of Jesus in terms like this anymore.... And I don't mean just this so-called apocalyptic poetry, this imagery of cosmic catastrophe and global horror (like something out of a Hollywood disaster movie), with Jesus finally bursting in over it with stupendous majesty, but rather what this language is meant to proclaim: namely, **JESUS AS LORD OVER THE CHAOS AND VICTOR OVER DESPAIR..... THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST, REIGNING AND RETURNING, LORD OF THE FUTURE, THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD, WHICH SHALL FINALLY BECOME HIS KIND OF WORLD.... THE KINGDOM OF GOD.... IN WHICH GOD'S WILL SHALL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!** // No, we just don't think of Jesus much like that

anymore; it's almost as if we fear this world is just too much for Jesus now, and the future might not really be in his hands after all, and that perhaps all we can seriously hope for from him today is just a little comfort, you know, a little inner peace and personal spirituality, as we and this tragic, terrifying world go on our way, sliding down toward.... toward.... well, we know not what and we'd almost rather not know!

My friends, I want to say to you today that the whole purpose of this Advent Season is to lift up our heads and raise our gaze once again to this Jesus in today's Gospel, the Lord of the Future..... not just to prepare us for Christmas, his historical coming in the past as the Babe of Bethlehem, but for his glorious "coming again" in the future..... and to let us see him again as the New Testament does: as God's Kingdom-Bringer! If he had not risen there wouldn't be a memory of the crucified Rabbi Jesus in the world, but he arose in order to return and make this world what it was always meant to be!

You see, for the past twenty-one centuries, from the first disciples to ourselves, this has continued to be the Christian stance in the world, the Christian life-style, if you will: simply this readiness and expectation, this day-by-day preparedness and anticipation, which leans into the future and lives from the future.... hopeful, optimistic, eager, always ready for the glorious end of things, the goal of history and human life: the coming of Christ's Kingdom, when the meek shall inherit the earth and those who mourn shall be comforted, when those who long for justice shall be satisfied, and the peacemakers shall be God's sons and daughters, and the martyrs shall be vindicated. Two thousand years of readiness and expectancy..... that's the story of the Church, whenever it has been a truly faithful Church, and that's the story of our individual Christian growth, too, whether we live

for twenty or forty or eighty or a hundred years! Readiness and expectancy, day by day!

To live like that is to have the blessings of the Kingdom right now, even before it gets here! To say that ancient Aramaic Christian prayer every morning – MARA NATHA: “Lord, come! Come today!” – is to be awake and alert to all of our human experience and opportunities, hour by hour. It’s a stance that sets us free from our past – from all the old mistakes and failures, the regrets and fears that still plague us – and free for our future, for all that God still has for us up ahead. It’s a style that keeps us un-trapped, un-shackled from the present world around us, from the false values and false gods of this age, and it continually transforms the way we see things.

When the world says “those people over there are inferior, those people of that race or gender, that class or country,” we know the Kingdom will be all-inclusive, and so we don’t conform to the world. // When the world says “only might makes right and only money matters,” we know the Kingdom will be based on justice and mercy and so, once again, we don’t conform to the world. In the New Testament, it is this constant focus on the coming Kingdom which does save us again and again, even if this Kingdom will not come for another two thousand years! We still live on tip-toe! We still live awake and alert! And it was this constant looking ahead which made the Eucharist (Holy Communion) so vital and central to the early Christians. For them, as it should be for us, the Eucharist was not only a re-calling of the past (of Christ’s first coming) but also of the future (his promise to return)... not only a looking back in time, but also a looking forward. As the Apostle Paul says in First Corinthians 11, verse 26: “EVERY TIME YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK FROM THIS CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD’S DEATH.... UNTIL HE COMES!”

And so, my friends, let us close with this thought: Right from Abraham on, this has been the trait, the characteristic, of the people of faith..... simply that, like the old patriarch himself, they are always ready to “move on” in their lives and in their ideas. They are the nomads of the mind, the Bedouins of belief, never getting stuck at any point along the way, but always willing, at the call of God, to pull up the tent stakes, and saddle the mounts, and round up the flocks, and move on again beyond their old horizons. Faith is precisely “risking on God’s future,” you see, and before God is through with those people – Abraham and Jacob, Moses and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and James and John, Matthew and Paul – before God is through with them, they have been moved and changed and stretched and enriched beyond all recognition, they have embraced ideas that once seemed completely crazy to them, and they have learned to be always ready, always awake, because God always has more for them.... In God’s FUTURE!

That’s the kind of people God is calling us to be today, you and me, a futuristic ADVENT people, and that’s the kind of cathedral he’s calling us to be, too, a forward- looking family “on the move,” which is what our Dean is constantly challenging us to be! // And so, on this Advent Sunday, as we begin a new year of grace, let us turn again toward God’s future for us, JESUS CHRIST, rejoicing that he is our destiny, and our hope, and the coming glory of mankind. AMEN! THROUGH IT ALL, “COME, LORD JESUS!”