

ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER
IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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ONCE AGAIN. A NEW THING.

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Text of a Sermon preached the First Sunday of Advent

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JEREMIAH 33:14-16 | PSALM 25:1-9
I THESSALONIANS 3:9-13 | LUKE 21:25-36

The older we get, the more we struggle with King Solomon's question: Is really anything new under the sun? The discoveries of science come close to giving us a feeling that there is something new around the corner. Of course, what they reveal is the inner working of what always has been. At least up to a point. There remains the questions all of material reality came from, and what is its destiny.

And so we wake up each morning and wonder what we have to look forward to. Growing up and growing old of course. But usually, the only thing that matters to us is whose face we will see each morning. What face will see in the mirror. Whether we are alone, or share our lives with partners and children, what matters most is who we hold in our gaze, in our hearts, and who holds and beholds us.

What might be new each morning reveals itself in what we wake up hoping for. Sometime that hope is strong. At other times, a distant sound. At the best of times it is the evidence that the best in us is serving the best in someone else. As imperfect as our lives are, there is a path. Blessings are added. We learn to stop robbing ourselves of joy.

All this is present in how we feel about our community, our family. How we feel in our body. All this we give the name of hope seeking to be fulfilled in love. And all this we often feel most and express most strongly when it is just out of our grasp. When we are separated from a loved one, our goals, our dreams. We hope for what is yet to come, what has been promised.

I wonder if you can hear all this in the powerful words of the apostle Paul this morning? He speaks to a congregation he is separated from, that he longs to be with, that he loves with a parent's pride and a brother's loyalty. How are you doing? I cannot bear being apart from you. We will not be our best selves until we are together.

"How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

"Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints."

Paul's great passion has focused like a laser on what matters. Oh that we might wake up today and see you face to face, that we might be a blessing to one another. That we might remember that God

himself, in the promise of his Son, is preparing that moment in his relationship with each one of us. He shall return. To meet us. We shall stand before him. And we will see him face to face. Joy!

Happy Advent my friends. We may not spend much time thinking about the great mystery of the promise of Jesus' Second Coming, but all in all, it may be the only thing that proves that our faith, our Christian religion, is something divinely inspired, and not a human illusion. Here is an image for you. The season of Advent is like one giant post-it note on our refrigerators reminding us each morning: "God is doing something new."

The more the scientist, the historians, and the anthropologists discover, the more we are tempted to say there is nothing new under the sun. Except, perhaps, for the humble birth of the God Man. Except, indeed, for the evidence of his resurrection from the dead, the empty tomb and breathing into us forgiveness and peace from the other side of death. Except, finally, for this message he left us, knowing from our point of view he would be delayed so long, to not to lose hope. He will return.

If you think about it, the promise of Jesus' coming again is just about the only thing that makes all things new. We humans play the same games in this material world, live the same course of birth, growth and decay – until that moment when the message reaches us.

Look. Behold he will appear. Get ready. He is coming to meet us.

Advent. This particular hope in his return. This alone assures that we really are made in love and destined to be loved into the perfected and completed versions of ourselves. To participate in how God will renew the world.

And we learn to pray God's word:

All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Show me your ways, O Lord, * and teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.

Happy Advent my friends. Whether we are near or far from our goals, near or far from home, we thank God for each other. Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see each other face to face, restoring whatever is lacking in each other's faith.

And we see that note on the refrigerator: God is doing something new!

And we turn to pray:

Maranatha. Come. Lord Jesus. Come.