

A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

First Sunday of Advent, Cycle C

Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1Thes. 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Here we go again! The season of love, peace, and brotherhood is upon us. Do you sense this in the middle of Walmart? Will all of those who gather for Black Friday be so filled with love that each will defer to the needs of the person waiting next to them in line? Get real!

That is exactly what our Church has been trying to do. We have heard apocalyptic readings at our Liturgies recently. More will greet us on Sunday. These come with the hope that the only preparation the season will bring is our own preparation for our personal end time when we come face-to-face with our Lord.

As the season of Advent opens we find our readings dealing with more end times themes. Because the first Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a new church year, we look now to the Gospel of Luke as Cycle C begins. However, we do not begin at the beginning of Luke's Gospel. The reading for Sunday actually comes just before the section on the Passion of Jesus. We are told very clearly to watch for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The signs are all of frightening dimensions--earthquakes, plagues, famines, wars, persecution. Men will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming. Yet, as these things begin to happen, believers are to stand tall and lift up their heads. Why? Because this is a sign that redemption is near. We are told in the last verses to stay watchful, praying for strength to escape what will happen and to stand before the Son of Man.

This lesson leaves many of us wondering how in the world we could be so strong of faith. The reading in Thessalonians gives us the answer. We must pray "fervently night and day" that the Lord will

increase in us and that He will cause our love for one another to overflow. We must pray that He will strengthen our hearts, making them blameless and holy. Paul never considered God a 911 operator. He prayed to God in all circumstances, in the ordinary things and in the cataclysmic.

Love that is growing is love that is being challenged to love the unlovable. We must ask ourselves how the comfort of our lifestyles affects our attitudes toward people in trouble and in need in our world. Is our spiritual life alert or drowsy having been lulled to sleep by our complacency? It is a time for examination of our readiness to meet our God as He comes in power and glory. Can we stand straight looking to the heavens in anticipation of our redemption? Or will we find ourselves at that moment uttering “if onlys” and “should haves”? The love that grows within us now will be the measure of our strength in our own “end time”.