

December 12, 2021

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 55:1-13

Young people's message: This week they have asked me to ask you, What are the things that nourish or feed our hearts and minds?

The first thing that comes to my mind, is knowing that we are loved. That Our God loves us very much. So much so that each and every one of us here was a thought of God. That the Creator of the universe thought about us and we came into existence. That is how loved and important we are to God. That God placed us in a family that loves us also. With parents and grandparents and brothers and sisters who love us also. God wants us to be surrounded by love. Knowing that you are loved truly shapes how you feel and think about yourself. We start to realize that we are very valuable to God and our families. How we think about ourselves shapes how we think about the world and our place in it.

At this time of the year we think about God's love for all of us. That Our God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to be one of us. So that Jesus could save us from our sins. Not only to save us from our sins but to give us eternal life. That we would become the Children of God. We did not have a hot clue about this before Jesus come and saved us. Yet when we understand this, we truly start to understand the depth and size of God's love for us. It is huge. I think that we only

understand a small portion of God's love for us. Our minds and understanding is very limited. If we truly understood God's love for us in its fullness, it would blow away our minds. That is how big it is for us.

There are other things related to love that nourish and feed our minds and hearts. Some of these things are: kindness, empathy, sympathy, compassion and understanding. When people act in these ways toward us they are nourishing and feeding our hearts. They may also be nourishing our minds and not even know it. When we show acts of love and kindness to others it shows that we have learned from those acts shown to us. We reflect kindness and love back to others that others have shown to us. This means we have internalized these kind acts and made them part of our character.

Another thing that nourishes our hearts and mind is prayer. It has gotten me through some hard times and made me stronger. Prayer has strengthened my relationship with God. I always try to be thankful for the graces He has provided to me. I could go on for days about prayer, but I will spare you that for another time.

Knowing that you are loved by your family truly nourishes and feeds our hearts. It shapes our personality and how we look at the world and behave in it. Then there is knowing that God loves us. The Creator of the universe thought and thinks about us. We are loved on so many levels. The earthly and celestially eternal levels. We are very valuable. Do not ever forget this valuable information.

Adult's message: The theme for the third Sunday of Advent is Prepare for the Light.

The prophet Isaiah gives us the best advice to prepare for the return of Our Lord. He tells us in Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of the one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight. "We all have come to realize that the one crying in the wilderness was John the Baptist. Who built on what Isaiah had to say? Yet John gives us a more detailed message than Isaiah. John tells us that in order to prepare we must "repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Well the kingdom was a lot closer than that. I would say it was directly in people's faces. John tells us to look deeply into ourselves and work on ourselves if we need to. That is what repenting is all about. It is very personal. Isaiah could be talking about an engineering project.

Advent is actually a Lenten period. However it is not as serious as the one in the spring before Easter. Advent does ask us to look deeply into our conscience. To recall those incidents or situations that we may need correct or make amends for. To put our relationships in good order. Fixing a bad situation may require talking to the person we have wronged and apologizing. We do a confession at every service that we have. We even have an actual confession service we can do privately with a pastor. Page 243 in the Cranberry book. As wonderful as all this is, it only makes things good with God. We often forget the second part of repentance and that is correcting the things with the people we have hurt.

Sometimes getting forgiveness from someone else can be difficult. They may have passed on to the next life. Or they may not be ready to listen and hear your apology. Learning to forgive yourself is sometimes

much harder. The greatest prisons we build are the ones we construct for ourselves. Forgiving and loving ourselves is not something we often do or are taught. The reason that it is so hard to do is that it requires a radical change in ones: spirit, mind and heart. The whole of one's life and being has to be refocused. You really have to work on yourself. That is why it is easier to forgive others than yourself.

When talking about being prepared for the Lord's return, I often think of the five wise virgins. In this parable they waited most of the day for the bridegroom. Who arrives at the most unusual hour of midnight? No one does that to a bridal party. He arrives in the pitch dark of the dead of night. I often think that Jesus constructed His message in this story to get a valuable point across to those listening. He will return at a most unusual and inconvenient time. Those of us who are watching and waiting should prepare with extra precautions. The five wise virgins were able to keep their lamps burning so as to meet the bridegroom. The bridegroom being Christ the Light of Our World. With their light they were able to welcome the Light.

As we prepare for the return of the Light of Our World, we should search our conscience. If need be, we should repair our relationships with other, ourselves and God. It is all about being prepared spiritually and physically. The Boy Scout motto takes on a deeper meaning at this time of year. As we prepare we should expect the unexpected. Just as the five virgins did. God bless and take care of each other, Pastor D.