



Reflection from Denise Simeone

Two men will be working in the field, one will be taken, one will be left.

Three women will be grinding flour, one will be taken, one will be left.

These are the images of the First Sunday of Advent in the year 2022. The last time we heard these Cycle A readings featuring the Gospel of Matthew was December 2019 just as Advent began.

Little did we know when we listened to this reading three years ago on December 1, 2019, what was ahead of us. Just a few months into the calendar year of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted not only in our community but worldwide and changed peoples' lives with a power that none of us could have imagined. What might we have done differently if we had known then what was ahead? Would we have listened to these Advent readings with a more diligent ear if we had even an inkling of the disruption, difficulty, pain, suffering, and death that was ahead? Will we listen now not knowing what is ahead but knowing that prophets and messengers speak with God's voice?

Advent calls us to still ourselves enough that we can pay attention. Paul tells us: "Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord." And again Paul says: "You know the time; it is the hour for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

"Therefore, stay awake!" Jesus tells disciples.

Over and over the messengers of God will remind us:

Wake up! Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight the path! The night is advanced, the day is at hand. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Be prepared! Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomes to you.

The prophets of Advent will speak powerful images to us:

There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain, all the nations shall stream toward it. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. Let us walk in the light of the Lord. Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest. The baby shall play by the cobra's den. The desert and the parched land will exult; they will bloom with abundant flowers and rejoice with joyful song.

Once again God is offering us the words of life. The signs of what this kind of living offers are abundant: Blind will see, deaf will hear, lame will leap, captives will be free, strangers will be protected, the hungry will be fed, the oppressed will have justice. We have much work ahead in order to make the paths for all God's people straight and open and wide!

Yet we have nothing to fear and we have been promised much. Remember Joseph, whose annunciation story is told on the last Sunday of Advent, listened, trusted and acted. We too, recognize that the Spirit of God is upon us and gives us all that we need to proclaim: "God is with us!".

*Blessings,
Denise*