

# “The Goodly Land I See” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent Midweek 4 December 21, 2022

- I. **Joshua 1:1-6; Hebrews 4:1-12; 1 Peter 1:3-9** – Previously read
- II. **Okay, the holidays are winding down – and rest may be in order.**
  - a. Even though these days and even this year is winding down, I pray that your faith and hope in the advents of Jesus are not less, but more.
  - b. All of us who follow Jesus can rest assured, that rest is coming...
    - i. Not the kind of rest we need after a long season of shopping, dinner parties, Christmas cards and family –
    - ii. We look forward to the rest of heaven... eternal rest, pure joy and contentment – and communion with God.
    - iii. I read Revelation chapter twenty-one at many memorials and funerals because it's a vision of what is coming to us... “The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rv 21:3-4).
    - iv. There is nothing more important than that rest – entering the promised land of eternity.
  - c. So, let's talk about Jesus...
    - i. When you think of Jesus, don't just see the baby in the manger... St. Paul says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.” (Colossians 1:15–19)
    - ii. I don't know about you, but it's hard for me to understand the awesome nature of Jesus... and to think that so many of us think of Advent and Christmas as an event that happened a long time ago, but He's not really that close now...
    - iii. Again, Paul says, “All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”
  - d. You see, Jesus wants you to be His own... to pull you in now... and forever... That's the reasons for all His advents – or coming into your life.
    - i. He keeps coming to you week after week in worship, as He blesses and serves you in Word and sacrament.

- ii. He keeps coming to you during the week when you have your devotions and His Word is at work.
- iii. Over and over again, “the image of the invisible God” comes to you... as He has a goal in mind... His advent on the Last Day.

III. **Our Advent series ends with the Book of Joshua.**

- a. The children of Israel were finally ready to enter the promised land.
- b. Imagine them as a foreshadow of the things to come, in other words, we will enter the promised land of heaven after a long difficult journey too.
  - i. But not every Hebrew entered the promised land... just like not everyone in this day and age will enter heaven.
- c. The problem back then was that the congregation of Israel didn't trust God's Word.
  - i. When they first came to the promised land, they didn't trust God to deliver them and help them defeat the giants who lived there.
  - ii. Right at the border to this place, they refused to believe that God was faithful to the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- d. Of course it's easy to look back and see how they should have trusted God – and their lack of trust ended with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and Moses and that whole generation dying (except for Joshua and Caleb).
- e. So in our text today, we fast-forward to the end of their wandering... and Joshua is about to take them to their long awaited destination.
- f. Just as God had promised, He was with Joshua, and they would eventually settle in the land He had promised to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.
  - i. How long would they be faithful to God after He delivered them?
  - ii. Well, they were faithful for quite awhile, but in the end, they would turn away from Him... which led to other nations conquering them and being sent off to exile...

IV. **The Bible is the church's Book of Advents.**

- a. For 1000's of years, God's advents point to Jesus... who leads us to the best promised land – an eternal “inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” as Peter says.
  - i. Interestingly, the names “Joshua” and “Jesus” are different translations of the same word.
  - ii. Jesus is our Joshua leading us to the promised land He has won for us.
  - iii. St. Peter says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pt 1:3–5)

- b. Think about how amazing that is – God comes to you... seeks you out so that He can give you an inheritance of the promised land!
  - i. His plan from the first pages of Scripture, shows a series of advents to save us.
  - ii. Of course this culminated in a baby born in Bethlehem that ultimately went to the cross so we could receive all these benefits of forgiveness and life and salvation.
  - iii. Even today, the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ is strong in you because of your baptism and faith.
- c. Now sometimes we find ourselves looking back rather than looking forward...
  - i. In some ways, you can imagine yourself like those Hebrews on the one side of the Jordan River looking into the promised land after 40 years of miserable wandering... and you are about to be led through the valley of the shadow of death to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
  - ii. Do you have this in mind on your average day? Do you believe in the promised land that sits in front of you?

V. **I hope you consider your future with God as important.**

- a. You have been saved totally by grace, not by your works, and you are responsible for what you do with God's gifts.
- b. The book of Hebrews tells us to learn from those who didn't trust God's promises.... And then it says, "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest" (Heb 4:11)
- c. Are you striving to enter that rest?
- d. Probably not 100% of the time... and sometimes we look a lot more like the disciples who fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane when they should have been watching with Jesus.
- e. God is longsuffering.... And we are still in the Kingdom of Grace.
  - i. God continues to makes advents to us in the highs and lows of life.
  - ii. But He still wants our devotion and love... and so we should not let God's patience and long-suffering lull us to sleep.
- f. Hebrews encourages us, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:1–2).
  - i. Is that you? Are you trusting the promises? Does your faith see?

VI. **So, Advent is about Jesus being born and so much more!**

- a. Jesus wants to fill heaven with you, me, and all His redeemed.
- b. So as the holidays wear down, and maybe wear you down, I pray your anticipation of the future glory will grow as well.

- c. “In this you rejoice,” says St. Peter, ... though now for a little while, if necessary you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Pt 1:6–9) Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from The Bible: Our Book of Advents, Copyright © 2021, Concordia Seminary Press, St. Louis, MO, and Dr. Dale A. Meyer.