Advent Vespers Luke 1:73-75
December 1, 2021 17-9-26-593

Our Advent Life
I. Faithful to God's Word.
II. Secure in our salvation.
III. Serving our Savior.

Dear Christian friends,

We've just begun **another** Advent season. On the CHURCH CALENDAR Advent ends with the coming of Christmas. IN REALITY Advent is **not just** a short four-week season but our WAY OF LIFE – our **walk of faith**. Since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost life in the NT is ONE, LONG **Advent season** of waiting and preparing for Jesus to **"come again in glory."**

Zechariah here talks to us about OUR ADVENT LIFE. **Our Advent life** is one of 1)being faithful to **God's Word**, 2)being secure in our **salvation** and 3)busy serving our Savior.

I. Faithful to God's Word.

As we wait for the Lord Jesus to come again GOD IS FAITHFUL. That's part of the message of **Advent**. When God makes a promise He ALWAYS KEEPS it.

Zechariah praised God because He because He ***"remembered the oath which He swore to Abraham our father."*** God had made a SOLEMN PROMISE to Abraham – the **promise** of a son and ***"descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky"*** – the **promise** of the land of Canaan – the **promise** of the Savior of the world coming from Abraham's family. God SWORE to do all that for Abraham.

Listen to this from Hebrews 6. ***"God made a promise to Abraham, and… 'He swore by himself.' He said, 'I will most certainly bless you and make you increase in number.' …The oath serves as a confirmation for them that ends all disputes. Because God wanted to show the heirs of the promise with even greater certainty that His plan was unchangeable, He guaranteed His promise with an oath."***

God wanted Abraham and his **descendants** TO BE SURE of His promises **because** they were going to have to wait a **long time** for them to be fulfilled. Abraham had to wait 25 years – wait until he was **100 years** old – for Isaac to be born. Abraham never did live to see the **promise** of the LAND of Canaan fulfilled. God didn't fulfill that promise for over 700 years until the **time of Moses** and **Joshua**. The promise of the SAVIOR was fulfilled more than 2,000 years **after** Abraham had died. God never forgot His promises – but when He FINALLY KEPT them it looked like He had ***"remembered to do"*** them.

During that **time of waiting** it often LOOKED and FELT **as if** God had forgotten His promise. We KNOW THAT FEELING, don't we? As we live our **Advent lives of waiting** it sometimes looks and feels as if God has FORGOTTEN HIS PROMISES to be with us – to take care of us – to answer all our prayers – to work everything for our good. Don't we sometimes wish we could **grab God** "by the shoulders" and say, "Hey, God, YOU PROMISED!" Look at **how many** GROW IMPATIENT with God – they give up on God **as if** you JUST CAN'T COUNT on Him.

Our Advent faith is not built on our FEELINGS or SIGHT but on God's clear Word and **promises**. GOD is faithful to His Word. WHAT ABOUT US? God ***"remembered the oath He swore to our father Abraham."*** Do WE REMEMBER to faithfully use God's Word – **remember** to faithfully come to church – faithfully teach our children God's Word – faithfully read our Bibles during the week? As we wait and **prepare** for Jesus' second coming we need to BE PEOPLE IN God's Word. The only way we can BE FAITHFUL and alert in these **last days** – the **only way** we can keep our priorities straight in these

hectic times – is to "READ, MARK, LEARN AND TAKE TO HEART" God's Word so we may be strengthened and comforted in our faith.

As we are IN GOD'S WORD we will grow in our faith. Through His Word God makes us sure and SECURE in our faith. That's JUST WHAT God wants for us. Our Advent life is one of **being**…

II. Secure in our salvation.

"The oath He swore … to grant deliverance to us from the hand of our enemies." Our enemies are the UNHOLY TRINITY of the devil, the unbelieving world and our own sinful natures. ON OUR OWN there's nothing we can do about them. Ignoring the devil won't make him **disappear**. Cuddling up to the **world** or our **sinful natures** won't make them our FRIENDS. Denying the reality of our **problems** – of **death** and **hell** – don't make them GO AWAY.

"Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, …because He grants us deliverance from the hand of our enemies." Jesus is not simply an EXAMPLE for us to follow. **Many people** celebrate Christmas as a SEASON OF LOVE and **goodwill** – a call to walk in **Jesus' footsteps**. That sounds good but MISSES the **whole point** of Christmas. We need a Savior NOT A ROLE MODEL. We already have a role model – GOD! ***"Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy."*** OUR PROBLEM is not that we don't have a **role model** but that we can't measure up to Him. OUR PROBLEM is sin, guilt, death. We need a SAVIOR for Christmas – **not an example**.

We have that **Savior** – born in Bethlehem – born a descendant of Abraham JUST AS God had promised. At Christmas we celebrate the FACT that the **eternal Son** of God was born one of us TO DO EVERYTHING necessary to save us. Jesus TOOK ON our **enemies** and rescued us from them. Jesus ***"crushed"*** the devil's hold on us by living an absolutely perfect life in our place. Jesus freed us from sin's guilt and **condemnation** with His own innocent death on the cross AS THE ATONING SACRIFICE for the sins of the world. Jesus conquered death and opened eternal life in heaven to us with **His own resurrection** from the dead on Easter morning.

Now we live our ADVENT LIVES waiting and preparing for Jesus to ***"come again and take us to be with Him"*** forever in heaven. As we wait we can BE SECURE in our salvation. The **devil** will try anything and **everything** to DISTRACT us and get our eyes off Jesus – to **get us** to DOUBT that God has forgiven us and that we really are going straight to heaven when we die. But there need be NO DOUBTS WHATSOEVER about **our salvation**. Keep your eyes ***"fixed on Jesus"*** – His manger – His **bloody cross** – His **empty grave**. BECAUSE JESUS has perfectly obeyed all the commandments in our place – **because Jesus** has shed His blood and died on the cross – God HAS FORGIVEN **all** our sins. The ultimate proof is **Easter** – Jesus HAS RISEN from the dead. **Yes**, we still sin every day but those sins are all washed away in Jesus' blood. **Yes**, the devil is still around to **tempt** and **torment** us but we don't have to listen to him or do what he says. **Yes**, we will still die one day but **Jesus** will be right there to take us to heaven. That's GOD'S PROMISE!

III. Serving our Savior.

"So that we are able to serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." Our Advent life is ONE OF SERVING our Savior. In the Bible the **word** for serve also means to WORSHIP. We don't just worship God **an hour** a week when we're here at church. **Worship** is our way of life - our WHOLE LIFE lived to bring glory and **honor** to our Savior. Milking the cows – cleaning the house – doing our homework – watching TV – playing sports, etc. – they are ALL OPPORTUNITIES for us to worship and serve our Lord Jesus. Paul told the Roman Christians, ***"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship."***

Jesus enables us to ***"serve (God) without fear."*** Our MOTIVE for trying to live a **God-pleasing** life is LOVE and GRATITUDE for God's grace. We don't try to obey the commandments to KEEP GOD HAPPY and OFF our backs. Jesus gives our **lives now** a WHOLE NEW MEANING and purpose. ***"Christ's love compels us,"*** Paul wrote. ***"He (Jesus) died for all, that those who live, should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised to life again."***

Jesus enables us to ***"serve (God) in holiness and righteousness all our days."*** Trusting in Jesus we now STAND HOLY in God's sight. Our sins have all been washed away in the blood of God's Son. We have been clothed with Jesus' ***"righteousness"*** – His holy, sinless life. Trusting in Jesus everything is ALL RIGHT **between** God and us.

We must be clear here. Jesus saved us FROM our sin **and** FOR a **life of service** to God. A lot of people stop with that FROM our sin and they drop that FOR a **life of service** to God. They take God's forgiveness as His PERMISSION to **keep on** sinning. Since we're not saved by ANYTHING WE DO then it doesn't matter HOW WE LIVE our lives. I can defy **God's will** for my life and still be a GOOD Christian. People may think that way but that's not WHAT GOD SAYS!

Jesus rescued us ***"from the hand of our enemies so that we are able to serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."*** Paul told the Ephesian Christians, ***"As far as your former way of life is concerned, you were taught to take off the old self, which is corrupted by its deceitful desires, and to be renewed continually in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new self, which has been created to be like God in righteousness and true holiness."*** In Jesus we ARE RIGHTEOUS and **holy** before God. That righteousness and **holiness** are now to SHOW UP in our Advent lives – in our language – our morals – our attitude – our priorities - our work ethic, etc.

Our ADVENT LIVES. **Soon enough** all the candles on our Advent wreath will be lit. Then it will **be Christmas**. **Then** the wreath will be gone – **Advent** OVER for another year. But in this dark world of the **last days** our Advent lives are to SHINE BRIGHT with faithfulness to **God's Word** – security in our **salvation** – service to our Savior. Amen.

Hymn #26