

Advent Devotional December 24, 2020

Scripture

Isaiah 59:15b-21

15b The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle. 18 According to their deeds, so will he repay; wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render requital. 19 So those in the west shall fear the name of the Lord, and those in the east, his glory; for he will come like a pent-up stream that the wind of the Lord drives on. 20 And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the Lord, from now on and for ever.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Janice Holmes '08

There is an old spiritual that was sung by slaves in America. They wept, "O, I couldn't hear nobody pray. O Lord, I couldn't hear nobody pray. O, way down yonder by myself, and I couldn't hear nobody pray. In de valley . . . On ma knees . . . Wid ma burden . . . An' ma savior, couldn't hear nobody pray. O ma Lord." Here was a people that endured a life full of injustice, oppression, and suffering. Yet they held on to a faith and hope in God for the Deliverer's promise made to humankind in ages past. How could they sustain such a belief and hope while experiencing such dark despair and loneliness? Well, the prophet Isaiah reveals the desire and power of our God to break through and intervene on our behalf. Isaiah describes a God who "sees it." A God who has compassion. A God who reaches out to us. A God of mercy who takes action. A God who is victorious. A God who reconciles and redeems!

Christmas Eve is a time of solemn remembrance along with celebration in praise and worship. It is a time to allow God to break through our hearts! We need remember our transgressions and failure to have a right relationship with God, yet celebrate the covenant made for eternal life and salvation that God fulfilled through the birth, death, and resurrection of the Father's only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Rejoice! The Light has broken through the darkness. For God's Spirit is upon you and God's Word shall not depart you, from this time forth and for evermore.

Prayer

O gracious and merciful God, we give You all glory, honor, and praise from the west to the rising of the sun. With gratitude we worship You in the beauty of Your holiness. We are so undeserving of Your gifts of redeeming love and eternal salvation from sin and death. Too often we ignore the opportunity to help, intervene, or even pray for others in need of truth and justice. It is easier to feel sorry for ourselves and wallow in the shadows of life's oppressive pressures and demands. Break through our stubborn minds and hardened hearts as You came into a darkened world on that first Christmas Eve. May Your Spirit remain upon us and Your Living Word dwell within us, now and for evermore. Amen.