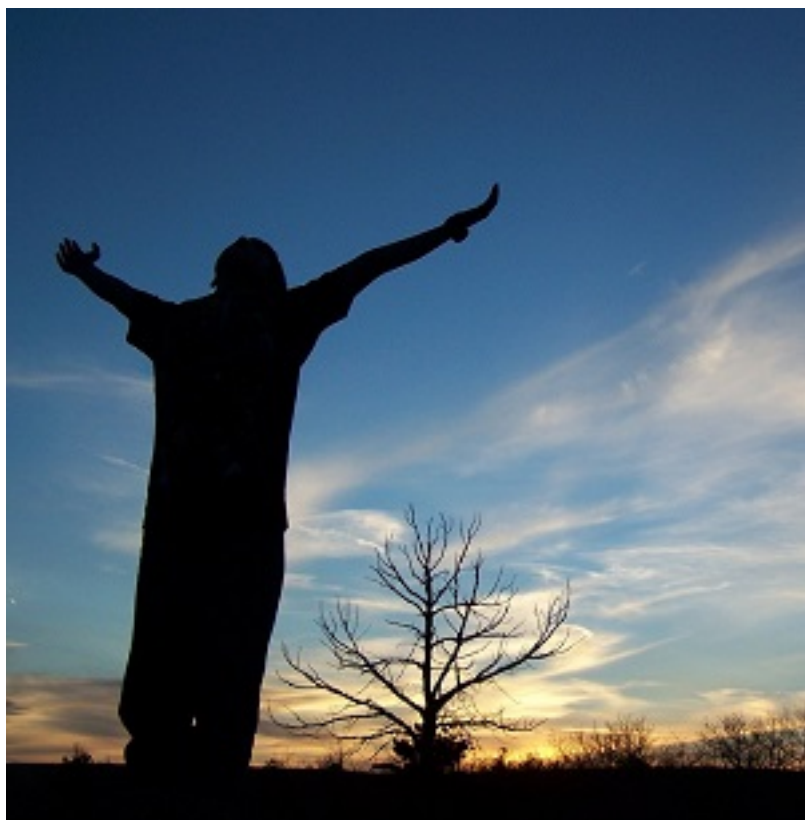


Commentary to the First Sunday of Advent: Waiting



This year Advent begins with two very positive readings, followed by a stern warning. The first reading is from the prophet Jeremiah. "The days are coming when the promise will be fulfilled," Jeremiah wrote to people who were decimated by their enemies. The Babylonians had captured many of them and sent them in chains to Babylon. The Hebrews knew that they had sinned against God. The exile was a result of their sins. But had God totally deserted them? "No," Jeremiah said. By their own choice they were no longer in a righteous relationship with God. But God had not given up on them. The time was coming when Jerusalem and Judah would be safe from all terrors. A righteous shoot of David would lead them. And Jerusalem would be a place of justice, a place of union with God.

In the second reading St. Paul writes the people of Thessalonica. These people expected the Lord to come soon. Some were nervous, some were absolutely frantic. Paul tells them that all they have to do is abound in love for one another and for all. This will strengthen them so they will be blameless in holiness before God at the coming of the Lord Jesus and his holy ones.

These are comforting words, particularly in light of Jesus' warnings in the Gospel. He speaks about horrible signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and people dying of fright. But he also says that when we see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, we should stand straight and raise our heads because our redemption is near.

Waiting for the Lord to come again is the focus of this first week of Advent. This waiting for the Lord is different than the usual way we wait. It is not like the waiting we experience when we go to the doctor's office and sit in the lobby reading old magazines or playing on our phones. We wait and wait and hope that when the nurse opens the door it's going to be for us, all so we can get stuck with a needle. And we are bored. Waiting for the Lord is not like waiting on line at Disney World. We go through that endless maze, and keep walking and walking and going nowhere, but at least we know that when the wait is over and we get to the front of the line, if there is a front of the line, we are going to have fun. Waiting for the Lord demands that we make the best use of the time we have before He comes.

How do we use our time? How do we wait for Him? So much of our time is wasted. We sit in front of a screen, computer or TV, for hours. Now, there is nothing wrong with relaxing, and there are great programs out there, but we need to accomplish more with our lives than watch TV, or play video games. When the Lord comes, we will have to show Him how we used the time He gave us. John Waller wrote a song called While I'm Waiting. It is about the waiting we do during the Advent of our lives, waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord. He wrote:

I'm waiting, I'm waiting on You, Lord,

And I am hopeful, I'm waiting on You, Lord

Though it is painful, but patiently, I will wait.

I will move ahead, bold and confident,

Taking every step in obedience.

While I'm waiting, I will serve You.

While I'm waiting, I will worship.

While I'm waiting, I will not faint. I'll be running the race even while I wait.

I'm waiting, I'm waiting on You, Lord and I am peaceful.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino, SJ