

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend and the first Sunday in Advent. As such, we begin our worship today with the "Season of Thanks" video service prepared by the World Hunger Subcommittee of the La Crosse Area Synod. During this challenging time, when so many persons throughout the world are living with hunger and/or food insecurity, we are drawn to the needs of our neighbors near and far through this service. Bishop Arends' homily provides a very important message for us all.

The "Season of Thanks" worship service includes the "Canticle of the Turning." Brad and Dawn Lindberg's family sing it for us on the video. (If you do not have internet access, please sing this hymn using the sheet music sent to you.) The song recalls the change that is taking place as we move into, and begin today, the season of Advent.

The season of Advent reminds us that there is still much darkness in the world. Today, I will light one of the purple/blue candles (a symbol of repentance) on the Advent wreath. (If you have an Advent wreath at home, you are encouraged to do the same.) Each time we worship during the Advent season, I will light another candle. Each new candle reminds us of Christ's power growing and lighting up the world: for the power of Christ overcomes the darkness.

Today, after the "Season of Thanks" worship concludes, I invite you to have a time of silent reflection as you think about these questions..."What darkness do we see in the world, today? and "What does the coming of Christ mean for the world?"

Read the Revised Common Lectionary gospel passage for today: Mark 13:24-37 (NRSV):

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or

at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

As we reflect individually, and collectively, on the darkness of the Advent season, let us also remember the hope that the coming of Christ brings. Thanks be to God.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy