

The Day Is Coming

**A sermon by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young
Presented on Sunday, December 5, 2010**

Sermon Prayer:

Gracious God, we thank you for your word that comes to us in so many different ways; your word that has called us here today; your word that creates of us a community of faith. Pray that as you speak to us in this time of worship together and as we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion our lives will be shaped by your life that we would come to live the life that you most desire us to live. That others would come to hear the good news as we have heard it and received it that Christ is Lord and savior of all.

Amen.

Sermon:

Well, I guess I will preach. Sorry. But we've heard this story many times repeated. And it's a story that isn't always the same characters or the same exact story but when we hear it we are reminded of all the different times and different ways we've heard about it. Just a couple of weeks ago I learned of an elderly woman who was living alone and she had just finished her noontime meal when there was a knock on the front door. And she answered the door and it was a man standing outside who had a flashlight and a pad. And he said that some of her neighbors were experiencing problems with their water meters and that he needed to come in and take a look at her water meter to make sure check everything was okay.

And so she opened the door to him and he asked her to please show him where the water meter is. She took him down to the basement and after a few minutes of inspecting the water meter he turned and said, "Ma'am, it looks like everything is ok with your meter, but thank you for showing me this." And she brought him upstairs and showed him out and after she closed the door, she realized that she had been robbed. That someone

else had entered the house while she was down in the basement with this man pretending to be the water meter guy, someone else had come in and stolen what money he could find and what few valuables he saw lying around. And of course that being an elderly person, they were for her heirlooms that could never be replaced.

You've heard that story before in different ways with different circumstances, sometimes with very tragic endings where someone is kidnapped from the home or someone is beaten or even someone is murdered. This story repeats itself over and over and over again; many times with disastrous results. Desperate times bring out the best in us and they bring out unfortunately the worst in us. Desperate times create desperate people. Advent is a time for us to see, to truly see not just the beautiful side of life, but also the ugly side of life, the reality of life in this world. And to see the ugly side of life in the light and hope of God's promised kingdom. Advent is a time for us to witness to the transforming work of God in our lives and the life of all of God's creation – transformation that brings hope not just to you and to me and to our families, to our congregation, but a time of transformation that brings hope to all.

We are living in desperate times. Economic resources continue to fluctuate for people; many find themselves still unemployed or joining the ranks of the unemployed. Some being unemployed for months, even more than a year; people are desperate for food, they're desperate for housing, they're desperate for medication, they're desperate for all the basic necessities of life. And by and large as we go about the business of our days, if we do not find ourselves numbered among the ranks of those who are desperate, we oftentimes just pass them by and don't even know they're there.

I recall a time when I was in seminary in Washington, D.C. A friend had invited me to attend a wonderful concert that featured the world-renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. And it was a glorious evening – we enjoyed the

music, we enjoyed the company of one another and as the curtain closed at the Kennedy Center and we prepared to leave my friend looked at me and said, "I have a surprise for you. I purchased tickets to a special reception where we'll have a chance to meet Mr. Rostropovich." And so we took the elevator up to the top of the Kennedy Center. And there as we entered this huge room was a grand feast set on a table with all kinds of cheeses and fruits and all kinds of wonderful delights for this reception. And as I noticed people gathering, I saw a homeless woman who went right up to that table and started filling her bag with the goodies that were there. I think I was the only one who noticed her. She was invisible to most of those well-to-do people that had gathered to meet Mr. Rostropovich. She filled her bag and then turned and went on her way and no one paid her any attention. No one greeted her; no one even tried to stop her, but she left. And it became for me a moment of discovery that oftentimes those who are in desperate situations in this life go unnoticed by those who are most able to help them.

The prophecy of Isaiah proclaims that the day is coming when God will establish a king who will judge the peoples of the world. This king will establish God's justice. This divinely appointed judge will execute God's justice and usher in God's peace without being deceived by what his eyes see and what his ears hear. A judge who decides without seeing or without hearing, how can this be? Just like the elderly woman that I shared with you in the beginning or just like the homeless woman who went unnoticed as she filled her bag with some treats. God will not be deceived by the surface of things. God looks into the heart and finds there the very truth of our lives. He is not deceived by empty, self-righteous rituals or prayer flowing with eloquent words that are meant to deceive. God sees us, all of us for who we truly are. God is not deceived and that fact is the only source of our hope; for, it is only when we come to see ourselves as God sees us that true transformation can take place in our lives, your life and

my life and the life of this world. It is only when we can see ourselves in God's light and truly know who we are to the core of our being with all deception being taken away that God can transform us into the creatures he most wants us to be.

Rev. Davie Napier, professor at Yale Divinity School, puts it this way: "The day will be, the day may be, the day can be when the Earth will be full of the knowledge of God – the doing of justice, the elimination of all the devices and structures that inflict human hurt, human destruction, human anguish! The day will be, the day may be, the day can be when we will accept one another – in all the earth – as we know Christ accepts us!" Advent continues to cry out that the day is coming when God's reign will transform the creation into the fulfillment of God's dream for all of us. That day has already begun and continues in our lives and the life of this world until God's justice shall reign in each one's heart and God's peace shall come. That is the hope that this season proclaims. That is the hope that shapes our life together as a community of faith.

Thanks be to God. Amen.