



The Shepherd's Voice

November 27, 2012

By Fr. Joe Rees

“Fig Trees & Olive Gardens”

“And Jesus told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is near. So also, when you see *these things* taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.”

Luke 21: 29-31

Fig trees are amazing. They grow when watered well and produce abundant sweet fruit that reminds me of one of my cookie delights, ‘Fig Newtons’. Perhaps you know that one. They need a warm, sunny environment like the central valley of California or the district of the Galilean lake. Jesus would pass by orchards as He walked those byways preaching of the Kingdom of God. He would even curse one of the fig trees for not producing fruit when He was hungry! (See Mt 21:18-22) I believe Jesus loved His Father’s creation, but indeed expected it to produce. People too. The fig tree represents another aspect to me, that of reminding me of the tree in the center of the Garden of Eden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve were not to eat of as ordered by God was the means of tempting them. The evil one roamed that garden somehow as a tempter serpent, becoming a slithering snake on the ground by God’s curse for his deception and devaluing of His creation. Then the indicted first couple who would pass the propensity to sin down through all ages took from a fig tree and covered their lower parts to avoid shame with one another. The fall had begun. No wonder the Son of God could curse the fig tree.

But, the leaves would sprout again in the spring like other trees. God made them that way. Jesus says for us to be wise in knowing that just as fig trees and other trees put forth leaves in the spring then summer will be near. Now Jesus says this in relation to the previous verses of chapter 21 in Luke

as He described the end times and devastations that would take place. The ‘*these things*’ of our verse above refers to “signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among the nations”, and other cataclysmic events. Jesus was meaning for us to be ready, to be on guard against the tempter’s ways. As the tempter still prowls around this world looking for all those people he might devour, we must realize the signs of the times. Is the fig tree sprouting? It looks almost certain that the leaves have already come into their fullness and we’re waiting for the summer. When shall that be? No one knows. Summer may not be in just a few months but...it could. But, the real hope for Jesus here in this passage is that “when we see *these things* happening we’ll recognize that the Kingdom of God is very near!” It’s time for us to realize that God’s Kingdom trumps all others, not to fear, believe and pray, wait upon the Lord, and go and proclaim His Kingdom to as many as possible!

In my vision this morning, as I write this to you, I see the Lord Jesus, kneeling down in the Garden of Gethsemane, an olive tree garden. In this garden...(I’ve always wondered if this garden is the closest portal to the Garden of Eden that Jesus had to come back to in order to re-consecrate...hmmm?)...in this garden, Jesus prayed until sweaty drops like unto His blood fell from His face. “Father, let this cup pass from me...” “Your will be done!” Here in that olive garden in the lonely dark hours of the night, Jesus encountered that nemesis of a previous Garden, that slithery serpent of evil in the form of betrayal by Judas. Once again, one of His creation, His people, had taken the fruit, the coins of a transitory temple of fallen religion that denied the Presence of God in the garden. “What have you done?” The disciples ran away when the temple guards came to arrest Jesus. One even lost his clothes, not even a fig leaf to cover his lower parts. Shame of betrayal. Loss

of the Fruit of the Garden. Ultimately, the plan of God for redemption and peace.

Why couldn't they see the leaves were in full readiness? Why didn't they see the Fruit of the Son of God? Why didn't they understand that their redemption was drawing nigh? Darkness shrouded their spiritual eyes. The tempter had done his work. They failed to pray with Jesus.

It's up to us now as we see the leaves of the fig tree of this present darkness drawing near to the summer of His Second Coming, to be ready. Advent calls us to this work of denying the tempter and being awake to the light of Christ. Are we ready for His coming again? Are we in the Garden (His Church) praying with Him? Are we proclaiming His salvation in this season of marketers and merriments? Are we ready for the incredible and cataclysmic events that will come upon all the people of the earth? Now is the time to recognize the fig tree in our Savior's Garden and eat of its

fruit. Now is the time to be preparing in prayer and believe fervently in our Lord Jesus Christ gift to us of eternal life. Now is the time to give ourselves to Jesus once again in prayer and readiness to be received by Him for His Second Coming.

Draw near to Jesus and pray. Watch with Him and pray. Be devoted to Him and pray. Pray for His Coming Again in great power and glory. Pray all who you love and know will be ready too...talk to them about your Savior Jesus.

In readiness and love and prayer for you.
Love in Christ,
Fr. Joe

** An opportunity to meditate and pray about Jesus' Coming Again is this Saturday at 9am here at Grace with Donna Brayton and her Advent Contemplation for the morning. Come.**

Sunday Servers this week...

December 2, 2012		8:00 a.m. Service	10:15 a.m. Service
First Reader	Zechariah 14:4-9	John Lipnicke	Frank Comstock
Psalms Reader	Psalms 50:1-6	Choir	Ann Fox
Second Reader	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13	Myrna Lipnicke	Joy Rosendale
Intercessor		Thor Strom	Rob Ackerman
Lay Euch. Ministers		Joan Jacobs, Richard Rieder	Cline Handy, KC Winward
Acolytes		Thor Strom	Rob A (C); Damon W (T1); Zachary J (T2)
Welcomers		Joan Gast, Cheryl Martel	Cheryl Martel, Myrna Lipnicke
Ushers		David Green, Dick Sholly	Dink Nash, Ted Vallas, Ray Seibold, April Knowles
Vestry Person of Day	William Culbreth		
Healing Ministers		Jan Simon, Robbin Gates	Joy Rosendale, Kari Campbell
Announcer		Trish Snider	JR Fox

Angel Tree Christmas Party
Sunday, Dec. 2 - 3:00 p.m. at Grace
 This is the day we throw a great party for the children while a parent picks up the presents requested by the children. These little ones, through no fault of theirs, might not have any Christmas without our help as they all have at least one parent in prison. We need lots of help setting up, supervising and cleaning up the party. Please call Tina Murphy or the church office if you can help.

Family Christmas Play
December 16 at the
10:15 a.m. service

Advent Lessons and Carols
 Sunday, December 9 at 7:30 p.m.
 Join us as we read Bible lessons and sing the music that leads us into the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Advent Family Day – Dec. 1, 2012 from 10a.m. to 1 p.m. – Join with your Grace family to make Advent Wreaths, Advent Calendars, Jesse Trees, and more. There will be “Godly Play” narratives on the Holy Family.
Advent Time of Contemplation – Dec. 1, 2012 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.- Spend some quiet time with the Lord as we begin this season of Advent. Donna Brayton will facilitate.

Sunday at Grace

8:00 a.m. – Traditional service
with Choir
9:30 a.m. – Coffee & Adult Forum
10:00 a.m. – Nursery opens
10:15 a.m. – Family Service
With Worship Team
10:15 a.m. – Children's Church

No special Second Sunday in December. There will be 2 services on December 9th and the regular coffee hour between services. There will be one service at 9:00 a.m. on December 23rd and December 30th.

Readings for Sunday

Zechariah 14:4-9

Psalm 50:1-6

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-31

We are using the English Standard Version of the Bible and the Lectionary from the Book of Common Prayer (Year C)

This Week at Grace –Nov. 27- Dec. 4, 2012

Tues. November 27

11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study – Isaiah
4:30 p.m. Healing Eucharist at the Oasis
6:30 p.m. Potluck Fellowship Dinner
7:15 p.m. "Christianity Explored"

Wed November 28

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Eucharist
9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting
6:00 p.m. **Vestry Meeting**
6:30 p.m. Youth Group

Thurs. November 29

6:15 a.m. 5 Thurs. Br. Benno's Team
7:00 a.m. Bible Study
11:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist at the Oasis
3:30 p.m. Alpha Club
7:00 p.m. Choir

Fri. November 30

6:00 p.m. Evening Prayer & Eucharist at Grace

Sat. December 1

8:00 a.m. Men's Bible Study
10-1 Advent Family Day
10-1 Advent Time of Contemplation

Sun. December 2

First Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir
9:30 a.m. Coffee & Adult Forum –
The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis
10:00 a.m. Nursery opens
10:15 a.m. Family Service with Worship Team
10:15 a.m. Children's Church

Mon. December 3

6:30 a.m. Men's Prayer

Tues. December 4

11:30 a.m. Rector's Bible Study at Grace
4:30 p.m. Healing Service at CHC
6:30 p.m. Potluck Fellowship Dinner at Grace
7:15 p.m. Teaching – "Christianity Explored"

Rector's Bible Study

Tuesdays

11:30 a.m.

Fr. Joe is leading the group through a study of the Book of Isaiah. Everyone is welcome.
B.Y.O.L. (Bring your own lunch)

Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Morning Prayer At Grace Anglican
All are welcome to attend.

Weekly – There are over 25 small groups meeting during the week. Check our newsletter for a list of all the groups or you can find the list on our website: www.graceanglicanchurch.com.

Save the date!

Nov 28 Vestry Meeting
Dec. 1 Advent Family Day – 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Dec. 1 Advent Contemplation– 10 am. to 1:00 p.m.
Dec. 2 Angel Tree Party – 3:00 p.m.
Dec. 5 Healing Service
Dec. 9 Second Sunday - Two services this month
Dec. 9 Advent Lessons & Carols – 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12 Soaking Prayer
Dec. 16 Special Family Christmas Play – 10:15 a.m.
Dec. 23 One Service at 9:00 a.m.
Dec. 24 Services at 5 and 10 p.m.
Dec. 25 Service at 10:00 a.m.
Dec. 30 One Service at 9:00 a.m.
Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Service at 7:00 p.m.
May 3 Anglican Men's Retreat at Forest Home