

Advent 2 North Island Mission, Vancouver Island BC

December 6, 2009

Baruch 5: 1-9

Canticle 19 The Song of Zechariah

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3: 1-6

This year, I read in a pamphlet sent to me the following: "Advent is a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place." It has remained with me, and the propers this week fit into this reflection ... We all long for a blessing of peace, and we all long to be people who bring a blessing of peace to others and into our world.

In the beautiful reading from Baruch we heard the words "For God will give you evermore the name "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory"

- we are to take off the garment of sorrow and put on forever the beauty of the glory of God
- we are to put on the robe of righteousness
- we are to put on a crown of everlasting glory
- we are to see everywhere splendour

Our longing, our desire for a blessing of peace is more than matched by God's desire for us, by God's longing for us ... for peace, for righteousness, for glory and splendour ... that is lasting. It is that underpinning or that under-song of our life that is the anchor in times of goodness and in times of difficulty. It is the ever-more-ness, the everlasting-ness, the every-where-ness ... that is part of God's desire, God's longing, God's love for us.

The source of our life and energy, the source of the life and energy of our city, and our world is God. Again and again, we are called throughout Advent to a greater vision, to use Advent as a winter training camp and see beyond our many concerns and anxieties ... and begin to see ourselves as called to become "righteous peace and Godly glory" for each other and for our world. ... it would shake and change the way you live! It would make your community here in Port McNeill, Port Hardy, and Port Alice places where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

It is fitting that we have also heard that beautiful reading of Zachariah's song, and you have sung it from the translation in Voices United. In it we experience the longing for deeper connections with each other, for greater neighbourliness ... from a different translation than the one read we hear ... "he came and set his people free. He set the power of salvation in the centre of our lives ... a long history of promises, of belonging, of caring, of being made holy before God as long as we live". Advent is a winter training camp

for recapturing a sense of story and of community, of becoming a channel for *God* to enter into the lives of others, into situations and circumstances of everyday life, into our world. Here in this place, you could use Advent as a winter training camp for enabling deeper connections with each other, greater neighbourliness ... it would shake and change the way you live! It would make your community here a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

In Paul's letter to the people of Philippi he points out that the primary focus of life in a congregation is the quality of its mutual love, the quality of mutual caring that is shown in its ongoing life. What of this community ... how does Advent as a winter training camp challenge you to become a community whose primary focus is the quality of your mutual love and caring for each other, and for the local community in which you live? ... if you make this your primary focus ... it would shake and change the way you live! It would make your community here a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

And it is as if John the Baptist in the *Gospel* is telling us clearly by his statement "prepare the way of the Lord" - everything about John tells us that he lives to prepare for someone else ... to bring *God* into the life of others. This is equally true of this congregation ... everything you try to do and say is so that other people might discover and experience *God's* love - everything we try to do and say is in order to bring *God* to birth into a situation, into a relationship, into the life of others, into the life of our communities and our world. All of us are asked the great Advent question ... "Will you ... bring *God* to birth in your everyday life and situation" ... it would shake and change the way you live! It would make your community here a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place.

Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon
our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness,
yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

May "Advent be a winter training camp for those who desire peace. By reflection and prayer, by reading and meditation, we can make our hearts a place where a blessing of peace would desire to abide and where the birth of the Prince of Peace might take place."