

## Nov 27 Sermon Manuscript

Whenever we find ourselves looking forward to a big event – a marriage, the birth of a child, a job change or even a big trip – our anticipation gets expressed as *preparation*. We fill the time between now and the big day tasks and checklists in order to make sure that when it's time to head to the hospital, get on the plane or walk our daughter down the aisle, we'll be ready. Not only do we want to be ready for the unexpected surprises and challenges that might come up, we also want to be ready to enjoy the experience to the utmost. We can invest hundreds of days and many thousands of dollars just for the joy of one moment holding the baby or lifting the glass or taking in the view.

This morning's readings call on us to **Pursue the Peace and Prosperity of Our Community**.

The prophet Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of God, dwelling on a high mountain, and people from every nation gathering in it to learn how to wage peace and practice justice. Walking in the Light of Lord is about illumination – seeing things as they really are – but it's also about lightness, freedom, the lifting up of hearts instead of swords.

In Psalm 122 – of the songs that pilgrims would sing over and over as they traveled to Jerusalem for the festivals – we are urged to pray for the peace of everyone who live within its walls and the prosperity of those who love that place.

The reading from Romans reminds us that salvation is near so it is time to wake up, leave the works of darkness behind and give ourselves wholeheartedly to working and living in the light.

We do this - so Jesus teaches in the gospel lesson – because we don't know the day or the hour of Christ's return. We need to ready, today and everyday. This alertness isn't just about standing around, watching and waiting. It's about working. Jesus says that it will happen when people are about their usual business, working in the fields or at the millstone.

We are to pray – and pray hard! – not just for ourselves but for the sake of others.

We to work– and work hard! – not just for our benefit but for the benefit of others.

We do the praying and working not dutifully, out of a spirit of obligation. We do it joyfully, with anticipation, with an absolute certainty that what we are praying for and working toward is absolutely going to happen! We will make it to the top of the Lord's mountain! We will enjoy the security of the high towers! We will see the Lord's return and it will wonderful... not just for us Christians, but for everyone everywhere.

Here in Cupertino we know everyone experiences Christmas but an ever smaller proportion of people observe it as a religious holiday. For us Christians, it's easy to feel like we to be Defenders of the Faith this time of year, charged with “keeping the Christ in Christmas” and preserving its holy importance. But what I want to suggest this morning is that the best way we

can honor Christ and do good work while we wait is by doing everything we can to **make Christmas a wonderful experience for people who don't celebrate Christmas!**

How might we do that?

**Bless our Indian and Asian neighbors with kindness.** Support their businesses this holiday. Shop local.

**Share your holiday traditions with neighbors you know don't (or probably don't) observe Christmas.** Take Christmas cookies over to them. If you have a holiday party at your house, invite them too.

**Be extra gentle and doubly grateful to essential workers.** Be patient with inexperienced servers. Smile a lot. Tip 20%. I saw a post about this little idea and thought it was great:

*Whenever I see a cashier having a tough day, I always look at the candy selection, if there is one, and look stumped as to what to get. I ask them "I can't decide. What's your favorite?"*

*I buy whatever they say, then hand it to them after the sale and tell them they're doing a great job and to have a great day. It perks them up every single time.*

As Christians, our lives are not to be lived standing in line for heaven. Our lives to be lived bringing heaven to earth! Let's make Silicon Valley a little more heavenly this Advent.

Amen.