

Sermon 2010 Advent 1  
Text: Is. 2:1-5  
Theme: "Reveille in the Darkness"

All of us have had the experience of walking down a dark alley. Even if we know the place well, when it is dark, our minds begin to invent things of which to be afraid. A cardboard box with a pile of garbage on top becomes a crouching mugger with a knife. An empty doorway has a strange shadowy figure lurking there. Suddenly the adrenaline is pumping and our heart is racing over nothing. We need light. Light reveals the truth all around us and even if the truth is ugly or dangerous, we are calmer when we are able to see it clearly in the light.

Sometimes our lives become like a dark alley. We make one wrong turn here and another there and everything keeps getting darker. We know we should turn around and head towards the light but usually out of pride, we just keep wandering and the farther we go the darker it gets.

Isaiah spoke to people who were about to enter the dark days of exile because of the dark choices they had made by worshipping false gods. Like those people, you and I are walking in dark times because of dark choices we as a nation and we as individuals made in past decades. Our greed as a nation and as individuals has taken a toll. The more we worship Wall Street and believe that our IRA's will save us, the more the Lord takes away. Like the unfaithful steward who buried his gift and protected it from loss, so too many of us have robbed God of what is due him. People cut their giving to

balance their budgets at home and in turn, churches cut their giving to balance their budgets and ministry fails to be done, missions close, the poor go unclothed and hungry and the elderly are left to fend for themselves in a world they no longer understand. But don't think that the financial hardships that we are enduring today are anything but discipline from God. When will we learn that we never save a dime by withholding our gifts to God? There is no chance or fate and neither the Republican party nor the Democratic party is more powerful than God – even if some would like to think so.

Likewise, our nonchalance about matters of faith in this free and self-indulgent society has left too many people with a shallow, uncommitted attitude towards Christianity. It should not surprise us when work or hockey or sleep is more important than worship. Haven't we, as a people, given the impression that worshipping God is just one slice of life among many? I have heard good Christian people say things like, "well church is fine, but there is more to life than just church." Really? Is that what we really believe? Is there anything to life without the worship of the one true God? Does anything else really matter?

Isaiah knew that there was nothing the people could do about the dark days they were in. They had earned their exile with their choices and their behavior and they were going to have to endure the consequences thereof. Now he was not concerned about fixing the past, but looking forward to the

future. He called them to bear down and look ahead to the days that were farther down the road – the day of their redemption. The light began to come back when the people were returned from exile but that was only the first dim light. The dawn was yet to come for the return from exile was only a foreshadowing of what was to come even as the exile was only a foreshadowing of what we should receive for our darkness were it not for God’s grace and love. The real dawn came the night the angels sang, “Peace on Earth!”

Our day began when Jesus came to earth and entered the darkness for us. He came to walk all of our dark paths. Think of the darkest path we could ever choose to walk – Jesus has already been there for us. Whenever I bury a veteran the military detail plays taps – a mournful sound, especially in a cold, barren, winter graveyard.

Day is done, gone the sun  
From the lakes, from the hills, from the skies  
All is well, safely rest;  
God is nigh.

I hear this played but I think of Reveille. These people whom we lay down will soon hear the great and final trumpet blown and they will rise to a new life and a new world. How exciting to realize that Isaiah’s prophecy will be completely fulfilled. You and I live in the in between time. We have seen parts of it fulfilled, but we wait for the completion. That is why it is hard to keep focused from time to time. That is why we can so easily lose our way and begin to think that money and

pleasure and fame in this world are what are important. But the season of Advent reminds us that he IS coming back for us. He has already come once as he said he would and walked all the darkened alleys of our lives. He has paid for every sin we would ever commit and now we await the completion of the promise.

That is why we pray, "Come Lord Jesus." Taps has already been played when he hung on that cross and now we and all of those who have gone ahead of us await Reveille! We stand in our gloomy alleys and we listen very carefully. We abandon all the silly distractions of this life and we join hearts with our brothers and sisters around altar as we receive the body and blood of the one who comes for us and we listen for the trumpet to be blown. We listen for Reveille to be sounded. What a glorious sound that will be!