

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Advent

'You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'

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The Lord is coming. This is the very meaning of the name of this season. 'Advent', 'The Coming'. As St. John the Baptist called forth the children of Abraham to repent of their sin, God was silent, even as now many believe that God is silent. For prior to the Incarnation of the Son of God, no prophet had been given Israel for three-hundred years. God had not spoken to His chosen people. He was silent, He was hidden. The promised land of Canaan had been subjugated and oppressed under gentile tyrants, the ancient laws of the Jews had been dismissed as obsolete, replaced in the hearts of many of the Hebrews with Greek Philosophy and Eastern cults of mystery. It would seem to any reasonable person that humble Zion had been forsaken by her God.

And so it is with us, who for two thousand years have gathered in every church, around every altar, week after week, century upon century, praying '*Come, Lord Jesus*'. But The Lord has not answered this prayer. He is silent, He is hidden. Our sanctuaries empty, entire denominations replace the true doctrine of salvation with political agitation. Desperate Churches throughout the world are persecuted and crushed to non-existence; the ancient Churches of Syria laid waste by Saracens, the venerable Churches of Egypt broken and scattered to the four corners of the earth. It would seem to any reasonable person that Christendom has been forsaken by her God.

But St. John cries out unto all the world, to every nation, in every place, at every time '*proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*' For even in their darkest hour, a remnant of the Hebrews kept sober vigil, watching for the redemption that was promised them, even as now, a fragmented Church ever keeps watch for the glorification once pledged. Broken Israel awaits; fallen Christianity keeps watch; for both know one thing to be the essence and hope of

their faith. The Lord is coming.

'Yet when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith upon the earth?'

Do not be deceived. The coming of God in the flesh is not something to be treated lightly, for it is obvious to us that Christ came in humility, born of a virgin, raised by a simple man, preaching a *kingdom not of this world*.

But recall that this is the same God who rained burning stone upon Sodom, and hellish sulfur upon Gomorrah; who touched the land of Egypt with His hand, and made of the waters blood, and of the light darkness, who descended in the night and killed the firstborn of both man and beast, who drowned the might of Pharaoh's army in the collapsing walls of the sea; who led Israel by the cloud of His glory by day, and guided them by the fire of His presence by night; whose mere being wrought terror in the hearts of the Hebrews at Sinai, whose voice made them tremble, crying out, *'Do not let God speak to us, lest we die'*; who summoned up Nebuchadnezzar to crush Israel for their idolatry, and raised up Persia to break the tyranny of the Babylonians; who shatters the proud in their heart, and destroys the ambitions of the powerful; who declares, *'I form light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do these things.'*

This is the God who is coming. This is the Almighty who speaks through His servant John. This is the Lord.

Tremble therefore, for John turns his face to you. *'Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'*

The Lord is coming; the Lord is coming in wrath, *'for even now the axe is laid at the root.'*

For in the fullness of time, Christ will come to us, a lowly child, born in a manger. But at the end of time, *'He shall come with the clouds'*, a victorious king, *'and all His angels with him.'* *'And you, who have pierced Him shall see His glory.'*

How will you receive the coming of the Christ clothed in human frailty upon the lap of Holy Mary? How will you receive the coming of the Christ, clothed in majesty, as the heavens are rolled up as a scroll?

'What shall we then do?'

'Repent, therefore, and believe the Gospel, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Malachi 3:1-7; Philippians 1:2-11; Luke 3:1-20.