

ISAIAH 11V 1-10 EYNSFORD/FARNINGHAM 8-12-19

There is something about the past that attracts each one of us. Deep in every human heart is a desire to repeat some experiences from the past. There is a hope of recapturing the thrill, the excitement, the joy of days now long gone. We decorate our homes with oil-burning lamps and candles, exactly like those that our parents and grandparents so eagerly cast aside when electrification came to their homes.

We do not feel that we really have a cozy home unless there is a fireplace; exactly the kind of fireplace that so many generations stood before, extra warm on one side and chilled on the other. Ones that were discarded when central heating became the fashion. We remember that previous generations provided food for their table from some garden plot, and all of us must have some small plot on which we can grow something to eat.

We celebrate anniversaries and birthdays, not just because they are milestones for those who observe them, but because they bring to our memory days that are past. Just for a moment, in the celebration, we can remember and relive how it used to be. We can experience again that special joy. That time for some of us long past, Oh the good old days.

That which is a common human yearning is also a deep religious truth. Deep within our human memory is a picture of that reality which no longer exists. There was a time and a place—a time so long ago and a place so far removed—that the people of the Bible called Eden, where life was surely different than it is for us.

It was a time of innocence. Adam and Eve could walk in the garden, in the company of each other and of God and feel no guilt, no embarrassment, even though they were not clothed.

It was a time of peace. There was no struggle; no anger, no hatred, no animosity. There was no mistrust between the animals; and man had no fear of any beast.

It was a time of harmony. Each of the creatures, each part of creation, had a place. All worked together to accomplish the purposes and the goals of God.

Then Eden was lost. The Scriptures tell of that loss in the story of Adam and Eve and the Serpent and the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. When the story ends, everything is different. Adam and Eve are ashamed of their humanness. The anger and enmity and mistrust between humans and humans, between humans and animals, reigns supreme.

But Isaiah tells us in our reading, **The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.**

So how does Advent, lights of love, and our reading from Isaiah link in together? How does it all make sense?

When we think of Jesus birth, we think of why he came. Jesus came to set us free from our sins of the past. As we learnt last Sunday at our Christingle He came as a light to the world.

As we look at the discs of love on the Christmas trees, they twist and twinkle in the light never to be put out. We can remember the folk with fondness and love, but also to look forward to the future with hope, knowing how they impacted on our individual lives.

So what about Advent, Advent, I think, is all about waiting, waiting with eager expectation. "Expectation" means that we are eagerly looking forward to something—hopefully something that promises good things to come for us. If we are expecting bad things to come, it fills us, instead, with a sense of dread. There are those for whom Christmas is more an expectation that brings about a sense of dread than of eager expectation. I think of the homeless, the hungry, the depressed, the weary. I think of those whose lives are dominated by hurt and anger and resentment from relationships broken and from love denied or betrayed. And I think of those whose lives have become disrupted and disjointed by war or terror.

We need to have something that we're looking forward to, something we are hoping for, if life is to have joy. It seems that God created us to need times of expectation to give meaning to our lives.

So what is it that you are waiting for? For Christmas to come? For presents to open? For family gatherings? For that bountiful holiday meal? In no time at all those will all have become memories, and we will be turning to other expectations—a New Year's Eve party, a special winter outing, the warmth of home on a stormy winter day. And then before we know it we will be looking forward to spring, to Good Friday, and the celebration of Easter. What an

abundance of expectations lie before us! We who worship the birth of Jesus, born in Bethlehem's stable, are blessed with a wealth of expectations, surprises that are worth waiting for, hoping for, joys that linger long after Christmas.

In Luke 17 verse 12 Jesus says, “the kingdom of God is within you?”

By grace through faith in Christ, you and I enter into THE LIVING HOPE.

And we are given a taste from the Tree of Life.

And because of this we can live in HOPE here and now as we await the “not yet,” when Christ comes again.

During Advent, we especially remember that we are living between two times: we celebrate the coming of Christ in the manger and we also look forward to the time when Christ will come again, bringing with Him a new heaven and new earth—a restored Eden.

And when that occurs, Isaiah tells us that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

So here is the one great purpose of Jesus Christ - the reason for the season - to seek and to save the Lost!

People like:

- Zacchaeus - deceptive traitors and evil-doers
- Paul - Christian haters and murderers
- John - seekers of God who have not yet found Him
- and YOU - in whatever category you fit (godless, god-hater, god-seeker or otherwise), with whatever sins, in whatever shape, with whatever baggage, with whatever past and whatever future...

When you think about it, this is a most incredible purpose. it's mind-boggling really.

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

