

29 November 2020

To all members of the St James Traditional Services

A Weekly Word of Encouragement: Our God comes: summon my people

Today is Advent Sunday – the beginning of the Christian year. Psalm 50:1-6 is the psalm appointed for today: read these verses (or the whole psalm) reflectively.

The Mighty God who is the true God of all, and the covenant God of His people summons everyone to His presence (Mt Zion) so that He might examine His people!

What does the just judge see?

Two things for which He rebukes His people:

1. Formalism in worship (vv.7-15): plenty of religious activity but a cold heart towards God. Their offerings need to express true heart devotion to the Lord, and a total dependence on Him (vv.14, 15)
2. Hypocrisy (vv.16-23): professing belief in the truth of God's Word but no changed life to match what they say they believe. God solemnly warns them and calls them back to the way of salvation (vv. 22, 23).

The New Testament people of God must resist Formalism and Hypocrisy. (In Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan, the pilgrim Christian, meets these two – Formalist and Hypocrisy. They have not entered the Way of Salvation because they have avoided the Cross where Christian had his burden of sin removed and became a new man. They soon fall by the wayside). Christians know our salvation in Jesus is assured and for us there is no eternal condemnation (Romans 8:1). Jesus is the One who is our defense lawyer (Advocate – 1 John 2:1, 2). But we must never be complacent about sin and our devotion to Christ.

Advent is a time to take stock of our walk with Jesus. It is a penitential season (purple is the liturgical colour: a sign of repentance) so we need to "cast away the works of darkness" and walk in the Light who is Jesus.

"Advent" means "coming". Jesus came the first time in Humility. Jesus will come the second time in glorious Majesty, and He summons us.

Prayer

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came among us in great humility; that on the last day, when he comes again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen. *Collect for Advent*

Remember

- keep praying daily
- keep reading God's Word
- keep in touch with your Christian community at St James: Wednesday 10am; Sunday 9am, 11am, 6pm.

With Christian love,

Robert