

**Addresses
for
Morning and Evening Prayer**

**according to the
1943 Lectionary
of the
USA 1928 Book of Common Prayer**

**Intended for use
by Layreaders
in the absence of a priest**

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Advent I

Revised September 2012

Note: the Lectionary provides two sets of readings for Morning Prayer and two sets for Evening Prayer. There is a separate homily for each set. The Lessons themselves are printed out for convenience.

Morning Prayer A

First Lesson: Malachi 3 and 4:4-6

***Here beginneth
the Third Chapter of the Prophet Malachi***

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.
2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

The call is out.
 The season is one of blaring trumpets announcing
 the coming of a King.
 Let us prepare ourselves,
 in prayer,
 in fasting,
 in the sacraments,
 in public worship,
 and especially in the Eucharist.

As St. Paul wrote:

*“But let us, who are of the day, be sober,
 putting on the breastplate of faith and love;
 and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.
 For God hath not appointed us to wrath,
 but to obtain salvation
 by our Lord Jesus Christ,
 Who died for us,
 that, whether we wake or sleep,
 we should live together with him.
 Wherefore comfort yourselves together,
 and edify one another, even as also ye do.”*

Let us, then pray, in the words of today’s collect:

Lord Jesus Christ,
 thou who didst once come as an infant,
 who didst live and die for our redemption,
 and who shall come to be our Judge,
 grant us the grace of true repentance, and make us
 ready to meet thee,
 thou who livest and reignest with the Father and
 the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:
 and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge
 them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto
 the LORD an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem
 be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old,
 and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I
 will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and
 against the adulterers, and against false swearers,
 and against those that oppress the hireling in his
 wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn
 aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me,
 saith the LORD of hosts.

6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye
 sons of Jacob are not consumed.

4:4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant,
 which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Is-
 rael, with the statutes and judgments.

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before
 the coming of the great and dreadful day of the
 LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the
 children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,
 lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Here endeth the First Lesson

Second Lesson: Luke 1:5-25

Here beginneth the Fifth verse of the First chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke

5 THERE was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

That was taken care of on the Cross,
but there's no "get out of jail free" card.
We do not arrive at His throne unspotted,
and He knows it.

We will be ready – but are we ready?
Do we want to face Him in His majesty unready?
We do have assurance of the outcome,
but what will it take to be finally ready?
That we don't know,
but we most certainly know
that we will stand before that throne,
and we most certainly will know our faults
and the spots to be cleansed,
and we shall be cleansed.

Advent is not a time for parties and celebration.

This is not the "Christmas Season".

As we prepare to celebrate
the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
that lovely story of His coming in humility to save us,
we also prepare for His great and power-filled
Coming again in glory,
the time of which Isaiah says:

*"Therefore I will shake the heavens,
and the earth shall remove out of her place,
in the wrath of the LORD of hosts,
and in the day of his fierce anger."*

The world shall be tried, as if by fire.
Unrepentant sin will be rewarded as it should be.
Not everyone will enter into glory.
And those whom He receives will be purified,
and will, when purified, be welcomed
into the heights of Heaven.

It's no small matter.
 So, if the hysterical preaching
 that has become so familiar is not right,
 then what are we to believe,
 and what does it mean to our living?

We are told again and again that great
 and powerful events are coming.

We just said, in the Apostles' Creed:
 "from thence he shall come
 to judge the quick and the dead."

At Mass we recite in the Nicene Creed:
 "And he shall come again with glory,
 to judge both the quick and the dead;
 Whose kingdom shall have no end."

In the Te Deum we tell Him:
 "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge."
 and we plead:

"We therefore pray thee, help thy servants,
 whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.
 Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in
 glory everlasting."

We cannot know the times or the seasons.

We have no detailed blueprint of events to come,
 but this we know:

that He is coming,
 that He knows our lives, in detail and in depth,
 that He cares about the standards He has given us,
 and that He will surely hold us accountable.

Yes, He forgives, freely and entirely.
 Yes, the believer's salvation is assured,

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn
 to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and
 power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to
 the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of
 the just; to make ready a people prepared for the
 Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby
 shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my
 wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am
 Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am
 sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these
 glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able
 to speak, until the day that these things shall be
 performed, because thou believest not my words,
 which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled
 that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto
 them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision
 in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and
 remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of
 his ministration were accomplished, he departed to
 his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived,
 and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days
 wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach
 among men.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily

Advent, an old word, coming from the Latin,
that just means “coming”.
Coming of what?
You’ll be noticing that Christmas decorations are
already up, everywhere you look.
You’ll be hearing both the old carols of Christmas
and the many sentimental songs of Wintertide.
You’ll see snowmen and reindeer and Santas,
and, oh yes, manger scenes mixed in.
There’s a lot of talk about the “Christmas spirit”
and good will toward men.
There’s a bustling to and fro,
buying presents for other people.
Many churches are already celebrating Christmas,
already having a good time.
Yes, Advent is about a coming
-- not a coming of wintertime
-- but the coming of the Lord.
And, though it’s full of promise,
Advent is not sweet, sentimental, and pleasant.
It’s awesome, fearsome, deeply serious,
a reason for trembling.
As the prophet Malachi said,
“Who may abide the day of his coming?”
Are you ready to stand before your God?
Yes, we are preparing for Christmas
in the weeks to come.
But is it the sweet story we all love,
of the Baby, his mother,
the angels, the shepherds and all that –

Homily

Did the First Lesson make you tremble?
It should have.
Isaiah tells us to howl
for the day of the LORD is at hand;
it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

St. Paul likewise declares the seriousness
of the coming day.
Echoing many of the sayings of Our Lord Himself,
he likens it to the arrival of a thief in the night.

We’ve all heard the TV preaching and seen the
popular books about the Second Coming.
Anglicans are usually rather dismissive
of these rantings, and should be.
Our Lord told us many times that we cannot know
the times nor the seasons.
Scripture is simply not intended to be an account
of future history.
It contains no timetables,
nor does it name names and identify individuals.
The detailed schemes involving specific events
and a so-called ‘rapture’
just don’t reflect what the Bible actually says,
nor what the Fathers and other
traditional commentators have seen in them.
But Advent is largely concerned with the coming
of the Day of the Lord,
with the approach of judgment
and of the end of the age,
and with the coming in glory
of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 5

Here beginneth the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

that is foremost in our minds?

Should it be?

Why did He come into the world?

Was it so that nice people could have a happy celebration?

Are we perhaps missing the point?

This morning we are thinking about a strange person. His birth was miraculous, to a woman, St. Elizabeth, thought to be far too old to have children.

The blessed event didn't come in sentimentality, in sweetness and light,

but with the frightening appearance of an angel to his father,

his father who was struck dumb, unable to speak until the child was born.

A blessed event, yes, but a fearful event as well.

Who was this child?

We know him as John

– John the Baptist (the Baptizer, that is),

the one foretold long before by the Prophet Malachi.

We heard it this morning:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.”

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

John came for a purpose, to carry a message, not a pleasant message, but a fearsome challenge.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” he cried,

“Clear the path, clean the house, get yourself ready

– He is coming!”

And when He comes?

*“But who may abide the day of his coming?
and who shall stand when he appeareth?
for he is like a refiner's fire”*

Fire burns.

A refiner's fire burns away the impurities
that spoil the value of the gold.

You know, gold ore isn't very pretty or very useful
as you find it.

It needs a lot of work before its value shines forth.

It has to be heated,

hot enough to burn off what can be burnt.

hot enough so the other impurities
can float to the surface and be skimmed off..

When it cools down, its not ready yet,
but has to be beaten and worked, with hammers
that drive out the rest of the impurities.

And when it is pure, it shines.

Are we pure?

Are we ready to stand before our God?

Do we shine?

We're not, and we don't,
and that's what Advent is about.

Listen to what the angel said to Zacharias
about his son:

Evening Prayer B

First Lesson: Isaiah 13:6-13

*Here beginneth the sixth verse
of the thirteenth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.*

6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.

9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

and to come to him daily to be filled.
 He wants us to be
 in a constant conversation with Him.
 We need to pray.
 We need to do our best
 to live the life He calls us to live.
 We need to be fed in Word and Sacrament.
 And we need to be changed.

He is coming.
 I don't want to hear him say, "I don't know you."
 I want to hear,
 "Well done, thou good and faithful servant,
 Enter into the joy of the Lord."

Let us pray.

Almighty God, lead us, as we prepare to celebrate
 the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as an infant,
 to seek amendment of life and forgiveness of our
 sins, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who
 liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost,
 now and ever. Amen.

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*"And he shall go before him
 in the spirit and power of Elias,
 to turn the hearts of the fathers
 to the children,
 and the disobedient
 to the wisdom of the just;
 to make ready a people
 prepared for the Lord."*

May we, in this Advent season, become a people
 prepared for the Lord.

Let us pray:

Almighty God, as we enter the sacred season of
 Advent, give us grace to look beyond the things of
 this world; and to prepare our hearts for the com-
 ing of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and
 our Judge; who liveth and reigneth with thee and
 the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Morning Prayer B

First Lesson: Isaiah 28:14-22

Here beginneth the fourteenth verse of the twenty-eighth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.

20 For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that

We need to look closely at our Lord's parable. Ten virgins were invited to the wedding. Ten virgins responded to the invitation. But only five virgins went through that door. Why?

What kept those five from the banquet? Could something keep me from that great heavenly banquet?

They had an invitation. They assumed the invitation made everything all right, They were certain of their place at the table. They were wrong. They were not ready. They didn't get in. Could that be me? Could it be you?

"But I'm a good person".
Are you really?
That's not what you just said
in the general confession.

*"All have sinned
and come short of the glory of God."*

"I've been a Christian all my life."
Have you now?
If you went and sat in a garage overnight
you wouldn't be a car.

God wants something more than a label.
He wants a life.
He wants us to start out like the five wise virgins.
He wants us to admit that we are empty,

We walk in the midst of a terrible distorted world.
 We don't really fit.
 We are considered strange,
 sometimes even despised.
 And, if we look at ourselves honestly,
 we can't even disagree.
 We are sinners.
 We have done those things
 we ought not to have done.
 We have left undone those things
 we ought to have done.
 And there is no health in us.
 Let's face it, we deserve to be forsaken, but

*“So God loved the world,
 that he gave his only-begotten Son,
 to the end that all that believe in him
 should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

AS blessed Isaiah said,

*“Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed
 unto the end of the world,
 Say ye to the daughter of Zion,
 Behold, thy salvation cometh.”*

The King is coming.
 We proclaim it in both Creeds:
 “He shall come again in glory...”
 We can rely on that,
 and we can rely on His love for us,
 and our observance of Advent should be one
 of expectant joy,
 BUT ...

he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to
 pass his act, his strange act.

22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your
 bands be made strong: for I have heard from the
 Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined
 upon the whole earth.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: Hebrews 12:14-29

***Here beginneth the fourteenth verse of the
 Twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.***

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
 which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the
 grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing
 up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person,
 as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he
 would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected:
 for he found no place of repentance, though he
 sought it carefully with tears.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might
 be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto
 blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of
 words; which voice they that heard intreated that
 the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was
 commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the
 mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with
 a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Has righteousness filled the whole earth?

Is the salvation of God the brightest and most obvious thing to be seen in this world?

Does the peace, the love, and the joy of the Lord appear to rule the affairs of men?

Or is it hatred and oppression and immorality that we see around us?

We see a world filled with war.

We see a world where many are starving who could be fed.

We see hatred and prejudice everywhere we look.

We see a church that is turning from its Lord.

We're Continuing Anglicans,

not really out of choice,

but because the abandonment

of Gospel and Tradition drove us out,

and here we stand.

Do we sometimes feel forsaken?

Do things sometimes look desolate?

Isaiah thought so,

but he was led, not to despair,

but to the proclamation of promise,

the promise of a new name,

and we are Church,

one, holy catholic, and apostolic,

the promise of God's love, and of a marriage,

and we are the Bride of Christ.

"And they shall call them," he says,

"The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD."

"Thou shalt be called," he proclaims,

"Sought out, A city not forsaken."

Homily

We tend to think of Advent,
and, if the truth be known,
of the whole Christian faith,
primarily as a look backward in time.
The church calendar seems to be organized
around the thankful remembrance
of the mighty acts of a time long gone by.
Advent we see, most of the time,
as a preparation leading up to
the joyful celebration of a miraculous birth
two thousand years in the past.
In fact, society around us is already celebrating the
sweet old story.
The Church, however, doesn't see things
quite that way.
Advent certainly is a preparation for Christmas,
but it's more.
We prepare for Christmas not by pretending
that the Incarnation hasn't happened yet,
but by looking forward
the same way the Old Testament prophets did,
to a coming of the Lord that we still await.

As we just heard Isaiah proclaim:

*“For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until the righteousness thereof
go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”*

Homily

It's the First Sunday of Advent.
If you haven't got early Christmas cards by now,
they'll be arriving soon.
I'll bet a lot of them will proclaim,
“Peace on Earth.”
You hear that a lot these days,
It comes with all the sentimental celebration
that has taken the place
of this solemn season of Advent.
It's a nice thought,
a pleasant one to speak and hear.
It is indeed the thought that this morning's
New Testament Lesson opens with.

“Follow peace with all men”

Does that sound easy?
Well, listen to what comes next:

*“and holiness,
without which no man shall see the Lord: “*

Here is the central message of Advent: holiness.

God looks down on the world that He loves, and
what does he see?

He sees a world in rebellion, a world full of sin,
a world that deserves to be punished, and by its
actions begs to be punished.
God looks down and His holiness, His perfection,
and His justice are offended.

As Isaiah said:

*Wherefore hear the word of the LORD,
ye scornful men,
that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.
Because ye have said,
We have made a covenant with death,
and with hell are we at agreement;
when the overflowing scourge shall pass through,
it shall not come unto us:
for we have made lies our refuge,
and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:*

Death, lies, falsehood.

Advent is not a season of wonderful celebration,
but rather a time of examination.

We may think we are good people,
but, Isaiah describes us well.

*“We have erred and strayed from His ways
like lost sheep
...and there is no health in us.”*

We prayed that today. Did we mean it?

Have we faced up to our sins?

Are we earnestly seeking God?

You know, we are not called to niceness.

We are called to repentance, to amendment of life,
to holiness, without which no man shall see God.

Hebrews reminds us of the original Mount Zion,
the place where Moses received the Law.

We are reminded of the awesome sounds
and the burning fire.

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

8 The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured:

9 But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

Here endeth the First Lesson.

Second Lesson: Matthew 25:1-13

Here beginneth the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

We are reminded that no one could even touch that mountain and escape death. And we are told this:

“Our God is a consuming fire.”

John the Baptist came, shouting,

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord!”

He preached repentance, and baptized with a baptism of repentance.

Our Lord began His public ministry with a call to repentance.

Scripture demands repentance.

Our liturgy is full of repentance.

It’s what God wants.

He has promised forgiveness, but the forgiveness is to those who are heartily sorry, who sincerely repent, who desire to turn from their sins, who hunger and thirst for holiness, holiness without which no man shall see God.

What can I do to attain holiness?

Nothing, really, except to repent and to call upon the Lord.

But, as Isaiah said:

*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD,
Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation
a stone, a tried stone,
a precious corner stone, a sure foundation:
he that believeth shall not make haste. “*

*.....
And your covenant with death
shall be disannulled,
and your agreement with hell shall not stand”*

And, as we hear in Hebrews:

*But ye are come unto mount Sion,
and unto the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem,
and to an innumerable company of angels,
To the general assembly and church
of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,
and to God the Judge of all,
and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
And to Jesus the mediator of the new cove-
nant, and to the blood of sprinkling... ”.*

*Wherefore we
receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved,
let us have grace,
whereby we may serve God acceptably
with reverence and godly fear: ”*

These are solemn days.

These are even fearful days,

but these are days filled with promise.

“I sing a song of the saints of God...”
says Hymn 243,

*“And there’s not any reason
no, not the least,
Why I shouldn’t be one too.
...And I mean to be one too.”*

Let us pray Almighty God, as we enter the sacred season of Advent, give us grace for true repentance; and lead us on the way of holiness, that we may sit with the saints in glory everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord, him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Evening Prayer A

First Lesson: Isaiah 62

*Here beginneth
the sixty-second chapter of the Prophet Isaiah.*

1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

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