

The Second Sunday of Advent
04-12-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 11: 1-10 A righteous branch will come from Jesse

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-21 Blessed is the one who comes to Judge.

Romans 15: 4-13 Our hope is in Jesus who came for both Jew
and Gentile.

Matthew 3:1-12 John the Baptist preaches repentance.

Introduction

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. As we prepare for the celebration of Christmas and as we prepare for when Jesus will come again, I would like to look at the readings we have heard from scripture and what they have to tell us about Hope and Repentance.

Hope

Firstly, let us look at the hope we have as Christians.

The Israelites were a people of Hope – Because they knew God. They were of course constantly turning away from God and suffering the consequences, but they knew God. They had hope because they knew God would never abandon them. Again and again, they turned back to God after wandering their own way.

In today's reading from the prophet Isaiah, we hear of the hope the Jews held onto, in that a righteous branch would come from Jesse. In chapter 11 of Isaiah, we hear of such a time of peace, that the wolf will live with the lamb. It's not something we would recognize as the normal world we live in today. A wolf would devour a lamb at the first opportunity, but it is the sort of symbolism that the Jewish people used to describe the hope they had because they knew God. This hope that they held looks to a time of peace in the future. This is the Hope those first followers of Jesus had, and the Hope that they could see being fulfilled in Jesus.

In the reading set down for today from Paul's letter to the Romans he says:-

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The first Christians were of course Jews, they had this hope for the future, but the hope they now had as Christians, was the fulfilment of what the Jews were expecting. Jesse of course was the father of the great King David, and Jesus was a descendant of David.

Paul knew this hope because of his experience with the risen Jesus. So not only was this hope something that the Jews were expecting to come, it was something they believed was being fulfilled because of the experience they witnessed in Jesus.

And this hope was not something that stopped when Jesus ascended into heaven, but rather something that was placed in All Christians through the Power of God's Holy Spirit.

And what about John the Baptist:-

¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John knew he was doing God's work, he also knew he was pointing people to God, but as a mere human being himself, he knew he needed to point people to Jesus, so they could truly understand the way to God.

As Christians, we have Hope because of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfilment of the hope that the Jewish people were expecting, and Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to those who would follow him, so that we could live as a people of Hope.

Repentance

So how does repentance come into it?

If God is the creator, then we need to be in tune with God.

In the Old Testament, we hear how God was constantly sending prophets to the Jews so that they might repent and turn back to God.

In the New Testament we have John the Baptist, preceding Jesus with a call to repentance.

As human beings we are not perfect, we can't be God, so we need to turn back to God. Jesus died on the cross so that we could be assured of forgiveness, and he rose from the dead to give us the ultimate in Hope. We need to repent so that we can continue to live into this Hope.

John the Baptist says in today's gospel reading:-

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matt3:2)

These are also the first words of Jesus recorded in Mark's Gospel.

In Matthew's gospel today we also hear,

⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matt 3:8-10)

Repent comes from the word Metanoia which means to “change how you think” also its the word for retreat.

Repentance is hard work. It's not just about saying sorry, but about continually turning our lives around to face God.

Christians should be good, not to get into heaven, but because we know we are God's Children now.

In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray, we say:-

“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”

It is through repentance, that we know forgiveness, and we are enabled to continue to live in Hope.

Conclusion

So, this Advent we are not just waiting to celebrate a fun time with parties and decorations.

We prepare to celebrate the fact God came among us in Jesus, to give us hope, and he will come again. As Christians we are a people of Hope.

Very fortunately this hope does not lie in our own efforts, but rather in repenting, in turning back to the God who made us, the God who loves us, and the God who wants us to live in relationship with Him.

In repenting we are assured of God's forgiveness and enabled to live as people of Hope. Amen.