

**MIDWEEK ADVENT 4 – RORATE COELI**

Text: Zechariah 2:10-12; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; St. Mark 13:32-37; TLH 58

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

I remember that as a young boy, I often had the feeling that something was about to happen. I could not identify what that “*something*” was, but I was sure something was just beyond the horizon, just beyond my sight, and when that something arrived, it would be no small thing. Of course, much of that prescience on my part may have been due to hearing my mother say, “*Just wait till your father gets home!*” I must admit that in that case perhaps my prescience was more a feeling of impending doom. Doom or not, I often had that feeling, as I do even today; something is on the horizon; something is just beyond my sight; something important is about to happen.

Is that not what we have been discussing these past four weeks of Advent, looking toward the distant horizon in hopeful watchfulness and joyful anticipation of our SAVIOR’s promised return? No, I do not mean the doom part; I am talking about the “*something*” part, and the “*no small thing*” part.

These last four weeks, we have been talking about being prepared, and just who does the preparing. We have been reminded that there is nothing at all within us that truly desires to “*be prepared,*” rather, it is God who does the preparing of us and for us through the work of His HOLY SPIRIT. In this way, we have also been reminded that Advent is not so much about our preparation, but our LORD JESUS’ coming, and that He comes first by breaking into human history and joining Himself to human flesh, becoming fully human while remaining fully God. God’s SON descended to us because we could not ascend to Him, for the reason that our sin has made us unrighteous and strangers to God’s salvation.

We have learned again of the love of God, a love that compelled Him, first to create, and then to save mankind when we had fallen away from the sanctity with which He had created us. We have again been reminded that the love of God is the *nature* of God, who is, Himself, the true definition of love. For God loved the world in such a way that He gave the life of His only-begotten SON to the cruelest of deaths to redeem it and restore it to Himself.

Without God’s love, life holds no meaning. Darkness and despair enshroud us and death reigns from the cold grave. Without God’s love, funeral services for our blessed dead can only be accompanied by meaningless eulogies that recount relationships and

accomplishments meant to validate and justify lives now spent upon the altar of self-justification. But such efforts of self-justification are futile, and cannot avert divine judgment because such eulogies *celebrate the dead* and our pitiful efforts of self-sanctification but *fail to proclaim the Gospel*; they fail to celebrate CHRIST and all He has done to save us; they fail to celebrate the life that our SAVIOR died to give us when first He appeared among us at His first Advent. Therefore, such attempts at self-justification and self-sanctification are meaningless and unable to dispel the despair and darkness that enshrouds every life lived apart from faith in JESUS CHRIST.

But in our Advent hymn, Pastor Gerhardt proclaims the Good News of our rescue in the coming of JESUS CHRIST. He bids believers to cast away grief and mourning and look up, for their redemption draws near. Something is on the horizon; something is just beyond our sight; something important is about to happen.

When we met on Wednesday last, we were reminded that our struggle against the devil and our own sinful flesh rages on, and even now, the cloven hoof of Satan remains in the door of our fickle hearts. You *are* forgiven, but the battle continues, and Satan desires to consume you if that were possible. And so he constantly whispers words of guilt and defeat into your ears, and thus, into your heart, in hopes of drawing you away from the only One who can save you.

But Gerhardt tells us...

*Sin's debt, that fearful burden,  
Let not your souls distress;  
Your guilt your LORD will pardon  
And cover by His grace.  
He comes, for men procuring  
The peace of sin forgiven,  
For all God's sons securing  
Their heritage in Heaven.*

JESUS, through the work He accomplished when first He appeared, has saved us. By His continuing presence in Word and Sacrament and through the sending of the Comforter, the HOLY SPIRIT, He has prepared us for that Day when He will come again with glory to be our Judge. Yet, even judgment should hold no fear for a Christian.

For...

*He comes to judge the nations,  
A terror to His foes,  
A Light of consolations*

*And blessed Hope to those  
Who love the LORD's appearing.  
O glorious Sun, now come,  
Send forth Thy beams so cheering,  
And guide us safely home.*

Jesus' final Advent will bring only terror and regret to those who reject Him. Those who have elected to go their own way, following the unbelieving world to perdition, the Judge will declare guilty of all charges. They will stand eternally condemned with no hope of pardon or redemption. But for all who have been prepared by faith, the great and final Day of Judgment holds no fear. Instead, that Day shall be the consummation of all their hopes and prayers. Every tear shall be wiped away and JESUS will be our God and we shall be His people forever.

Something is on the horizon; something is just beyond our sight; something important is about to happen. The Babe of the manger, who grew up to be the Man of the Cross, *"shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead"* and His *"Kingdom shall have no end."* He shall be *"A terror to His foes"* but for those who have been prepared for His reappearing, *"A Light of consolations And blessed Hope"* as our EMMANUEL, God with us.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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