

Pastor Andrew's Weekly Thought

Hope of Advent

Isaiah 9:1 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan-- ² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

Yesterday was Advent Sunday. The purple candle that was lighted during the worship service was the candle of hope. The coming of Christ is hope for the world. He is the Light that shines in the darkness.

After her victory over Israel in 721 BC, Assyria brought in the Gentile population to live in Galilee. To the Jews, this was like a gloom of dark clouds over their Jewish identity. Into this gloomy place, Jesus chose to begin His ministry. Matthew tells us how this prophecy was fulfilled: "Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali-- to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah" (Matt. 4:13-14).

This year, Christmas is unlikely to be the same. The pandemic has brought in a gloom of darkness. But even then, as we anticipate the coming of Christ, "there will be no more gloom." Hope overcomes gloom. If you have Christ in you, you have the light of the world that overcomes darkness, and darkness cannot overcome light.

If we have hope, we will be able to endure the present gloom. That's what Psalm 42:11 says, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." The Psalmist does not wallow in the mud of gloom. He gets hold of himself and question himself, "Why are you downcast, O my soul?"

When we are downcast, we must get hold of ourselves, and not let ourselves drift into gloomy self-talk. Someone puts it nicely, "Worry is a conversation you have with yourself about things you cannot change." Rather than allowing a drifting conversation with yourself, direct your conversation to God, as someone suggest to us "Prayer is a conversation you have with God about things He can change."

I pray that this Advent will enable you to hope in God. And remember however dark the darkness may be, the tiniest little light is able to pierce through it! Is there not the tiniest little light in you? If so, that light can pierce through it. But Christ is not just a tiny little light. He is "a great light." So "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you" (Isa. 60.1).

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the hope I have in You – hope that enables me to see light at the end of the tunnel. What a difference that light makes compared to when I am unable to see light at the end of the tunnel. Thank You for Advent, for Christmas, and for Your future coming that gives me hope.