



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY December 9 & BEYOND”

“The Bible is and contains and points to Reality”



I love it when archeological digs in Israel, and in other parts of both ancient and less-ancient eras, conclude that a bible historical description was “right.” This just happened again recently with the discovery of Sumerian clay tablets that recorded a Babylonian slave trade from early Israel (actually, Samaria, the Northern Kingdom). Of course, the tablets were discovered several years ago. But, you know,

sometimes it takes a bit of time to translate from Assyrian or Babylonian! But then the results are published, and some publication will post the results, and Voila!, we have biblical affirmation!

We don't have to wait for archeology to substantiate the reality of the Bible. But when it does happen, it gives another boost to both those who are already the Faithful, and to a world desperately looking and waiting for absolute Truth – desperately, because there is no other truth that does not fail.

Along this line of realities, one of my favorite readings from the Gospels is the one that we will hear on Sunday, December 9, 2018, this coming Sunday -- you are cordially invited to attend our 8am or 10:30am service to hear this lesson read, and worship with us! The reading from the Gospel according to Luke is a favorite of mine because it very precisely “dates” a particular time and moment leading up to the appearance of the adult Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Christ, amidst the Jewish people, the chosen People of God. That's just as good as digging something up out of the ground.

This is part of the Gospel to be read to which I am referring:

“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high-

priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness;”

It’s like taking a pair of historical binoculars and ZOOMING IN on a moment. The moment is not yet about Jesus; it is about John the Baptist. We had already heard in the Gospel the prophecy about John, that being what his ministry job was all about. His job, prophesied (you can say foretold), was to be in the wilderness and announce that the Savior was coming soon, and quickly. That’s the “John the son of Zechariah” at the end of that Gospel sentence.

A theology lecturer from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, NY, and then at Boston College, Michael Himes, was quoted by one of his students to say that, “This is the most important line in the entire Bible.”

This one? Really? Why? Himes said it shows that our faith is based in reality. Our faith is not based on “Once upon a time...” This is not a fairy tale. It is not an abstraction. Luke goes out of his way to tell us in this time and in this place, “when Tiberius Caesar was in the 15th year of his reign, Pilate was governor, Herod was king... the word of God came to John in the wilderness.”

We, too, have an incarnational faith. We live our transcendent faith in this time and in this place. We listen for the Word of God that comes to us in the wilderness of confusion, in the midst of anxiety and fear. We do not take our current, contemporary context and, reading from old and outdated philosophies of “how to get along” try to make sense of things. That philosophy of life only says “now” is real, and whatever else is not. Perhaps helpful, but not real

Our lives as Christians would have no meaning if that was the case. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that He is thus ALIVE. And therefore REALLY accessible and available to us now.

John the Baptist was real. His message of repentance was real. His message pointing to Jesus coming was real. And then one day, this Messiah, the one known in heaven, and in scripture from prophecy as the Lamb of God, shows up on the scene with John the Baptist. That’s reality.

Even better, because this is not an abstract faith, context matters. And that means I Matter to God. You matter to God. YOU are REAL to GOD. And that is absolutely the Truth, and it is absolutely life-changing.

Yes, as Jesus has also told us of the reality of what is to come, it may feel like our current reality is the wilderness still! But we are encouraged to know that He has come to us, and was victorious over death, and then He is coming again.

The long awaited moment of the advent of Jesus Christ was pinpointed in the Gospel to the forerunner, John, the messenger telling us of his soon arrival. The Bible tells us what that exact time was in reality. Through those reigns of those particular people, Jesus' mission of real mercy and real compassion endured for three years. And then, long after the reigns of Emperor Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate and Herod and Annas and Caiaphas, Jesus mission of real mercy and real compassion and hope continued throughout history in His Church – beyond good times and bad – until right now – our current reality - and we know it will continue until God's final time for the real world as we know it is fulfilled, and our new reality comes into being.

Believe it. It's real.

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Second Sunday of Advent
Baruch 5:1-9 Psalm 126 Philippians 1:1-11 Luke 3:1-6

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: The Second Sunday of Advent

8:00a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue*—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

MONDAY: 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY: AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)