A.M.D.G. 1st Sunday in Advent - C Text: Isaiah 35

 November 29, 2015

耶稣降临节第一个主日以赛亚书 35

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God! Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; no traveler shall go astray. The redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

以赛亚书 35Chinese New Version (Simplified) (CNVS)

**35**旷野和干旱之地必欢喜；沙漠要快乐，又像番红花一般开花，**2**必茂盛地开花，大大快乐，并且欢呼。黎巴嫩的荣耀、迦密和沙仑的华美也赐给它；人们必看见耶和华的荣耀、我们　神的华美。

你们要坚固无力的手，稳固摇动的膝。**4**又对那些忧心的人说：“你们要刚强，不要惧怕。看哪！你们的　神，他要来报仇，来施行报应，他必来拯救你们。”那时，瞎子的眼必打开，聋子的耳必畅通。那时，瘸子必像鹿一般跳跃，哑巴的舌头必大声欢呼；旷野必涌出大水，沙漠必流出江河。**7**灼热的沙地必变为水池，干旱之地必变成泉源；在野狗的住处，就是牠们躺卧之处，必成为青草、芦苇和蒲草生长的地方。那里必有一条大路，要称为“圣路”；不洁净的人不能经过，那是为那些行走正路的人预备的；愚昧的人不会在路上留连。**9**那里必没有狮子，猛兽也不会上去，在那里必遇不见牠们；只有蒙救赎的人在那里行走。**10**蒙耶和华赎回的人必归回，必欢呼地来到锡安；永远的喜乐必临到他们的头上；他们必得着欢喜和快乐，忧愁和叹息都必逃跑了。

**At The Edge Of Our Longing 我们期盼的边缘上**

I don’t know about you - but there is something about this time of the year that creates in me a certain feeling of melancholy.  I don’t know what the reason is, exactly - or how to adequately describe the feeling - but it is there.  Perhaps it is a longing - a yearning inside for some unfulfilled hope - for a magical time of the year - that is infused with the perfection of family and children and time to enjoy the season - that never quite seems to come off that way.  I guess one way of putting it would be a vague sense of yearning to live a Norman Rockwell painting – to have a perfect Christmas.  Do you know what I mean?  And yet here we are once again, at the edge of Advent - hoping that maybe this year, things will somehow be different.

-2-

我不大了解你们，但是今年这个时候发生的事情让我感觉很悲伤。我也不指知道确切原因，或如何适当描写这种感觉，但就是有。也许是期盼，内心对未完满的希望的期盼，为这一年神奇时刻的期盼--这个神奇激发了美好的家庭和孩子享受这一季节--永远不会是这种方式。我猜想一种方法可能是模糊的期盼的感觉去体验Norman Rockwell 的油画，去拥有一个完美圣诞。你能明白我的意思吗？再一次，在耶稣降临节的边缘，希望今年通过某种方式有不同的事情发生。

Ann Weems, in her beautiful Christmas book of poetry called “Kneeling In Bethlehem” writes:
​ Who among us does not have dreams
​​ that this year will be different?
​ Who among us does not intend to go
​​ peacefully, leisurely, carefully toward Bethlehem …
​ Who among us does not yearn
​​ for time for our hearts to ponder the Word of God?
​​ moments of kneeling and bursts of song?
​​ the peace of quiet calm for our spirit’s journey?

Ann Weems 在他她美丽的圣诞诗集 --＂跪拜伯利恒＂，她写到：
 我们中间谁没有梦想
 今年将会不同？
 我们中间谁不愿意
 平安地、悠闲地、小心地去往伯利恒......
 我们中间谁不愿意期盼
 我们的内心思索着上帝的话语？
 在跪拜的时刻唱着颂歌？
 平安安宁的灵魂之旅？

Advent is a time of yearning – of longing for things to be different – not just over the next few weeks – but in our lives, and in our world.  The theme chosen for Advent this year by the Worship Committee is ‘Christmas: A Journey Of Hope’ – recognizing that this year in particular – a lot of people are on the move in our world – and that now, more than ever – we need to hear anew God’s Christmas promise of hope in the midst of overwhelming circumstances and times of uncertainty and

despair.
耶稣降临节是一个祈盼的日子--渴望在我们的生活和世界里发生与以往不同的事情--这种祈盼并不仅仅限于随后的几个星期。今年我们教会敬拜委员会经过讨论选定＂圣诞：希望之旅＂做为今年耶稣降临节的主题。我们意识到尤其在今年，世界上有很多人在迁徙，--现在，比以往人数更多。--在这种充满强烈的不确定和绝望的环境和年代里，我们需要重新听到上帝对圣诞希望的承诺，

-3-

In our Advent readings each year, we hear echoes of this same sense of yearning - the same longing for our world to somehow be different from the reality in which we find ourselves.  This is nothing new. The people of Isaiah’s day - living in Exile in Babylon - yearned for the day when they could return to their homeland - a time when God’s promises of peace and justice would prevail.  In today’s Hebrew scripture reading, the prophet writes of the dream of God’s transformation of a world caught in the grip of madness.  He speaks of God’s presence and hope – even though everything around him would say otherwise.  *“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who*

*are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear!  Here is your God!”*

每年的耶稣降临节我们都能听到祈盼的回声。同样是渴望这个世界在某种程度比我们现实生活更精彩。其实没有什么新鲜的，在以塞亚的时代，流亡的人们生活在巴比伦，他们同样也是祈盼回到故乡，回到上帝承诺给他们的充满和平和正义的年代。今天所读的希伯来经文＂以塞亚书＂中，先知写的是一个陷入疯狂的世界的转变。以塞亚讲到上帝的存在和希望--即使围绕他身边的每个东西完全和他讲的不同，他还是在说；＂你们要使软弱的手坚强，无力的膝稳固。对胆怯的人说：你们要坚强，不要惧怕。你的神就在这里！＂

James Conlon, in his book ‘At The Edge Of Our Longing’, writes:  “Few can deny that we live in a world that seems bent on its own destruction - that has abandoned its sources of wisdom. It is world where planes become weapons, classrooms become war zones, and wars break out in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East - a world where the innocent ones and the beauty of creation are sacrificed on the altar of global unrest.  We live in a world that is marked by a new age of anxiety whose defining moments are terrorist attacks and homeland security;  a world where reverence for the child as the icon of hope has been squandered – a world where the dream of a better tomorrow has collapsed in daily reports of global conflict, ecological degradation and battles over oil and power.”  (p.11)

James Conlon在他的书＂我们的渴望在边缘上＂中写到：很少人否认我们今天的世界似乎趋于自我毁灭--抛弃了它自己的智慧源泉。这个世界飞机成为武器，教室变成战场。在阿富汗、伊拉克、中东--在这里天真、美丽的创造物被牺牲在动荡世界的祭坛上。我们目前所生活的世界是一个焦虑的世界，每个时刻都焦虑着恐怖袭击和家园的安全：最为希望的标志--尊重儿童已经被践踏了。--一个美好明天的梦想被每天听到的世界冲突、生态环境的退化和为石油引起的战争给毁灭了。(书中第11页）

Oh - we understand all too well this yearning for the dream of God’s shalom which Isaiah paints for us.  Modern scientists tells us that we live on the ‘edge of chaos’.  The old will never be the same again, things we once took for granted don’t seem to make sense any more, and boundaries are being stretched - often beyond recognition.

噢，我们还知道以塞亚为我们描绘了对上帝和平梦想。现代科学家告诉我们，我们生活在＂混乱的边缘＂。旧的永远不会再一样，我们曾经认可的东西似乎再也不能理解了。界线被抻拉--已经超出了我们认可的范围。

 -4-

But the Good News toward which the biblical story, and this season of Advent points  - is that within the chaos, there is something new still unfolding … sometimes confusing - often challenging - but always pregnant with possibility.  That’s the hope and promise of Christmas.  One of the great theologians of the 20th Century, Paul Tillich, put it beautifully when he wrote: “ Waiting,” says Tillich, “anticipates that which is not yet real.  That is, if we wait in hope and patience, the power of that for which we wait is already effective within us.”

但是圣经故事中的福音和耶稣降临节告诉我们：在混乱中，仍然有新的事情揭示......一些迷茫的事情--通常又十分挑战，但是总是孕育着可能性。圣诞的希望和承诺。其中二十世纪伟大神学家之一， Paul Tillich，美丽地描写到：＂等等，＂，Tillich说，＂期盼的事情还没有实现，如果我们等待在希望中，耐心等待，这种力量已经在我们中间开始起作用。＂

Theologians think of this as an ‘interim ethic’ - a way of behaving in the period of between the now and the not yet - that embodies - or gives legs to the dream.  Mahatma Gandhi also once put it this way:  “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

神学家把这个认为是＂临时道德＂--在目前和还没有发生事情之前的这段时间内的一种行为，还包含的意思是赶紧从梦中醒来。甘地也曾经用这个方式描述：＂你希望看到世界变化，改变自己＂

Our Advent journey always begins inside each of us – within our hearts.  Each year we are invited to walk the Bethlehem road – to take a journey of faith – to make the decision to step once more into an unknown future with trust in God’s promise of Emmanuel: God with us.  This is the challenge and the hope on this first Sunday of Advent - as we stand at the edge of our longing - desperately waiting for something to happen to us and the world we inhabit.  As Gandhi has challenged us – the journey of hope begins with each one of us.  We must be the change we wish to see in the world ....  we must embody that for which we yearn - and so participate in the great unfolding of God’s promise for all creation.  So may it be.

耶稣降临节之旅已经在我们每个人内心。每年我们都被邀请踏上去往伯利恒的路途，踏上信仰之旅，做一个决定再次进入未知的未来，坚信上帝以内马利的承诺：上帝与我们同在！耶稣降临节的第一个星期，我们站在期盼的边缘，渴望等待着在我们身上及我们生活的世界上发生变化。就像甘挑战我们--希望之旅已经开始，要看到世界的改变，我们必须改变自己。......我们必须包含在期盼中--加入到上帝对宇宙万物的承诺的揭示中。就是这样。