

Walk in the Light of the Lord

- ☆ Up to the New Jerusalem (vv.1-3)
- ☆ Judged by the God of grace (vv.4,5)

In the name of Christ our Light, dearly redeemed out of all the nations:

It's not so strange for us. We often consider the end from the beginning. Starting another sports season, you hope to make it to the finals and even the championship. Music practices anticipate concerts or a musical. After high school, maybe you're looking at trade school for the most interesting, profitable job for you. Masters or doctorate? Where can you use it in the end – which is really the beginning? But we're all guessing, right? When I served in campus ministry, majors changed eight times on average.

If you're baptized in the Name of Jesus, adopted with that Word-powered water into the family of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, you know the God who knows the end from the beginning. This life has only two possible endings: either with God in heaven or with God's enemies in hell. We were all headed toward ***"weeping and gnashing of teeth,"*** as Jesus describes it. But then Jesus came, as we see again this Advent, starting at the end of Jesus' life where our true life really begins. He rode as our humble King into Jerusalem to die for all and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. God ***"wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*** (1 Timothy 2:4 EHV) On this first Sunday in Advent the dear Holy Spirit is calling to everyone: **Walk in the Light of the Lord....**

☆ Up to the New Jerusalem (vv.1-3)

This is the message that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² This will take place in the latter days: The mountain of the Lord's house will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it like a river. (EHV quotes)

Such a dark time while Isaiah was prophesying. (700 B.C.) The cruel Assyrian Empire smashed the ten northern tribes of Israel, then all the fortified cities south toward Jerusalem. Hezekiah was building his famous tunnel to bring water into the city for the inevitable siege. That's when the Lord God crushed bragging Assyrian King Sennacherib, wiping out 185,000 of his soldiers in a single night. The disgraced Assyrian ruler went home only to be assassinated in his idol's temple by two of his own sons who then escaped. (Isaiah 37:36-38) Jerusalem triumphed that time, but sadly, a century later Jerusalem and the Lord's temple of Solomon were destroyed, and the remaining Israelites exiled in Babylon.

The mountain of the Lord, Mount Zion, was only about 2100 feet tall. How would it be ***established as chief of the mountains?*** The "Mile High City" of Denver is 5280' above sea level. The third highest mountain in my home state of Oregon, the South Sister is 10,358'. In fact, the hills around Mount Zion look down on the place where the Lord's temple stood. What's so great about Zion?

Catch the Advent timing – the end from the beginning: ***This will take place in the latter days....***, a technical term of the Old Testament prophets for the Last Days. As Bible history unfolds, that means the time between Christ's first coming to suffer and die, and his second, final coming to judge the living and the dead. We don't know how long these Last Days will last, but their end is absolutely certain.

Wealth and political power are not. The chilling, killing time of Isaiah showed how God's people because of their unfaithfulness could lose superpower status in just three generations. Tradition holds that wicked King Manasseh put the old prophet Isaiah into the trunk of a carob tree and sawed it in half. (Hebrews 11:37) So ended the ministry of the prophet revered as the greatest evangelist of the Old

Testament.

Maybe you've heard that only 70 years after humble King Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the Romans destroyed the city and the Lord's temple all over again. What then does the Holy Spirit mean that God would raise Jerusalem above all other mountains? Isaiah answers: *Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. Then he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For from Zion the law will go out, and the Lord's word will go out from Jerusalem.*" It's all about God's Word from Jerusalem to the world.

Surely, we need the light of Advent in our day. From the beginning God kept promising to save not only His chosen people of Israel, but also the Gentiles, to make them part of the true Israel that believes in the God of Israel. Toward the end of Isaiah the Holy Spirit calls to all the nations to **Walk in the Light of the Lord**: *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is dawning upon you. Look, darkness covers the earth, and deep darkness covers the peoples, but the Lord will dawn upon you, and his glory will be seen over you. Nations will walk to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."* (60:1-3) Loving the light: *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned."* (9:2)

Believers throughout the world are still calling to all who will listen: **Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord**, by faith streaming like a river to **New Jerusalem** until the dawning of the Last Day to be...

☆ **Judged by the God of grace (vv.4,5)**

In this fragmented age of broken cultures and societies wiping out their own innocent unborn, when male and female are not longer cherished by "science" denying the existence of the Creator, the light of Christ is needed more than ever. Consciences are troubled when husbands fail to love as Christ loves His bride, the Church; when wives fail to yield *as to the Lord*. (Ephesians 5:22-33) Our own hearts are troubled by all the turmoil inside and out, as violence seems to escalate, and weapons of mass destruction proliferate. Man's judgment spreads death and destruction, hurt and anger everywhere.

Into this state of things, a light must shine through the dark sky, a light that cannot be produced by the human heart, light which is from above, a gift of God. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.* (John 3:16) This light is the whole work of Christ and all the blessings He brings¹ of forgiveness and peace and joy. He is *the Sun of Righteousness [who] will arise with healing in his wings.* (Malachi 4:2 KJV) To be **Judged by the God of grace** means mercy as Jesus says, *"I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12 EHV)

He will judge between the nations, and...mediate for many peoples. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into blades for trimming vines. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Jesus says, *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36) God's Word, the Bible, always directs us to Judgment Day and beyond for this world peace we all desire. But in our hearts and homes this Advent, God calls us to *"turn from evil and do good...seek peace and pursue it."* (1 Peter 3:11)

A tiny town in the Italian Alps holds a strange celebration every year. They celebrate that the sun is shining. Surrounded by mountains, down there deep in their valley they can't see the sun from November to May.² Dark and overcast – how depressing it can be if the sun hides for days on end. Piercing the darkness, comes the Lord Jesus Christ with light that shines God's goodness and all-forgiving grace. If your valley lies in darkness these days, **wait on the Lord**. (Psalm 27:14) Learn from Paul in prison, *"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, Rejoice."* (Philippians 4:4) Dear Jesus, *"In your light we see light."* (Psalm 36:9) **Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord.** Amen.

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