

Advent Reading for Sunday, December 24, 2017
“First Advent Fulfilled – Second Advent Foretold”
(Isaiah 61:1-2)

Today is Christmas Eve, the day traditionally viewed by the church as the final day of Advent. With it falling on Sunday this year, our church family will gather for worship in the morning, and return in the evening for our annual Christmas candlelight service. What a great joy it is to celebrate the Advent and arrival of our Savior who was born in Bethlehem in the fullness of time!

Isaiah’s prophecy for today, like several others in the Old Testament, contains significant truths that were fulfilled in Jesus’ first Advent, but also includes sobering information about His Second Advent, which is yet to be fulfilled. Here is the prophecy: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God”* (Isaiah 61:1-2).

With simply a casual reading, it is easy to pass over the phrase that refers to His Second Advent. It is only when we look at how it is used in the New Testament that we discover this truth, and we see it through what Jesus failed to say. Here is Luke’s riveting description of the occasion: *“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ‘THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD’. And He closed the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’”* (Luke 4:16-21).

You may have noticed that Jesus stopped before reading the words, *“and the day of vengeance of our God”*. The part Jesus omitted refers to the judgment that will come at His Second Advent when God’s vengeance is revealed. Because those words pertain to this future event, Jesus did not read them. The phrases He read were fulfilled in their hearing, as Jesus told them. He was the promised Messiah, and Isaiah’s words revealed His purpose.

As we celebrate the first Advent of our Lord, let us also remember that He will return again. While numerous prophecies were completely revealed in His first coming, numerous others still await their completion. His Second Advent will be a terrifying time of judgment for those who have not turned to Him in faith. But for now, as we celebrate His birth, we rejoice that He came as Savior: *“And you shall call His name Jesus, for He*

shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Have you humbly turned to Him in faith, confessing your sins, and seeking forgiveness? Jesus said: “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).

Giving Thanks – Thank You for graciously meeting our greatest need in coming to be our Savior! Thank You for delivering us from the vengeance and wrath to come!