

THE SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Matthew 22:34-23:39

To close the Sundays of Lent, it would be impossible to find a more appropriately meaningful name for it than the Sunday of Advent. This closure is particularly meaningful for the fact that the Sunday of Advent is dedicated not only to the Second Coming of Christ but also to his First Coming as stated by the hymn (sharagan) of the day:

"The mystery of the coming you didst foretell through the prophets of Israel, whom you did choose after Moses; they spoke through the Holy Spirit in manifold examples; O Saviour grant us mercy and forgiveness of our sins. When the latter years drew near, as the seers had announced, and you, our Saviour, did arrive in the fullness of time, you did appear among men in the form of a servant. On the sixth day you didst create Adam in the lordly image; but he kept not the commandment and was divested of the robe (of innocence); whereas you, O new Adam, did visit the lost one during the sixth age."

This Sunday, in commemorating the First Coming of Jesus, aims at refreshing our minds of the truth that our rise from fall and our restoration may be possible only by the incarnation of Christ and by other ministrations attached to it. The hymn (sharagan) of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son says: "We bless thee, O Father eternal of thine only-begotten Son, whom you have sent for the return of the lost sheep; turn us also from a sin through the passion of your Son. We exalt thee, O thou Word and Light, who didst find a lordly image by the light of a candle and did restore the same; restore us, who are fallen in sin, through your holy passion."

The main idea, contained in the Gospel reading of the day's Divine Liturgy is the fact that Christ was the expected Messiah and the Saviour of mankind. Jesus himself asks: "What do you think of Christ (the Messiah)? Whose son is he?..." Then with a long series of "woes" He scolds bitterly the Pharisees and the Scribes, by which scolding, the same time He states the supremacy of his authority and reveals who He is. Only from the last few lines of a long lection does he indicate His Second Coming: "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say 'Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord'."

The books of the New Testament ascertain that there will be a Second Coming of Christ, who will come this time not as a gentle and lowly Saviour, but as a dreadful and righteous judge. He will come in the glory of His Father with the retinue of angels to judge humanity as the shepherd who separates sheep from goats.

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The parable ends at this point and Jesus, makes this remark: 'For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light; and I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous Mammon, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal habitations.' What Jesus wants to say is that if the sons of the world use all the means under their disposition to gain and keep their worldly lives in security, why should not the "sons of light" be equally wise to utilize the gifts and opportunities granted them by God to obtain and guard the life of heaven?

The central instruction of this parable is encouraging also from those who, though "not far from salvation", but being occupied by worldly problems, cannot yet devote time to lay up spiritual treasures for themselves. We may have friends in heaven by performing benefactions in this world; for each person is an intercessor for his benefactor by the throne of God. As the clever steward made use of the most troublesome time of his life to secure his personal well-being, so also anyone in his last days can secure his everlasting happiness through a heart-stirring benefaction, provided he repents for the injustices he may have wrought. If a robber could inherit paradise during his agonies of death by simply showing a sincere sympathy with the One co-crucified with him, so also can everyone achieve the same salvation if only he will learn how to use his brain and his conscience...

From The Golden Chain of Lenten Sundays
His Beatitude Shnork Kaloustian

THE BUREAU OF MINES

WASH. D. C.

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