

Rev. Lynne Ogren
November 29, 2020

Zion Lutheran Church, Lewistown, Montana
First Sunday of Advent, Year B
Isaiah 64:1-9

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. Amen

If you could write a letter to God, knowing that God would actually read it, what would you say? Maybe something like the word we heard from Isaiah, “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!”

Come down, O God, and do something about the mess we’re in. Come and save us from a virus we can’t see but that is inconveniencing some, debilitating others, and killing more than we ever expected.

Come, and save us from our own selfish sinfulness. Come, and bring peace to a world that seems hell-bent on accusing and blaming others, while taking no responsibility for how its actions—and inaction—are contributing to the conflict and chaos.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.

You’ve done it before, God. You created the heavens—and the earth—for goodness sake! When you separated the seas from one another, “the mountains quaked at your presence.”

We know the stories of the mountain that came to be known as Zion, how it was covered in clouds when Moses climbed up it to receive your instruction and how it shook when he came down and delivered your word to the people.

And then you sent Jesus to us. “For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.” Jesus shook the world with your love and grace.

He shook our expectations of who you are as our God and who we are as your people in your kingdom. And in his resurrection, Jesus shook the very powers of sin and death that held us captive, and he set us free.

It still feels like our world is quaking. We are shaken to the core by the uncertainty of our time. Like Isaiah said, sometimes it feels like you have left us, God. Was it us? Did we do something wrong that you would leave us to fend for ourselves? We need help to hope for a better day. And in order to hope, we have to trust in the possibility of new life.

That’s your job, O God. New life. It’s your specialty! You created us, your people. You formed the first human beings out of the dust of the earth. You formed your people Israel and set them apart, blessed them to be a blessing to the world.

You called forth those who followed Jesus to become a new church, the Body of Christ. And your Spirit gathers us, whom you have claimed in Holy Baptism, into this community of believers. We are here today, God, because of you.

We believe in you, the maker of heaven and earth. But we believe in you mostly because you are our Father. Even as we trust in your power to build and destroy, we trust even more in your love for us, your children.

Some days we are tired, dear Father. Some days we are weary of wondering when things will change, when they'll get better. And so, we will wait for Jesus to return, "coming in the clouds with great power and glory". But this is not a sit-down-and-be-quiet kind of waiting. No, we will wait and watch for your presence, even now.

We have seen you come down in a gathering of volunteers who fed almost 300 people with Thanksgiving meals this week. We have seen you come down in the eyes we look into above the masks we wear to protect one another as best we can.

We have seen you come down in the dedication of the overworked—like nurses and doctors and teachers and small business workers trying to stay afloat. And we have seen you come down in the ways people are caring for one another with simple acts of kindness.

There is so much more we could do. And it would be a lot easier without a pandemic going on. But maybe you want us to notice how you are with us, even now. Adversity has a way of changing us—but it isn't the adversity, it's you, O God. You are molding and reshaping us in the midst of our struggles, forming us into your instruments of peace and life.

We are your people, O God. You forgive us, again and again. You re-create us again and again. And you have claimed us, once and for all. We are your people, your children. In you we place our hope.

Amen