

First Sunday of Advent, December 3

The Collect and Psalms will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer. The Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the New American Standard Bible.

The Collect: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Isaiah 64:1-9

1 Oh, that You would tear open the heavens and come down,
That the mountains would quake at Your presence—

2 As fire kindles brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—
To make Your name known to Your adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at Your presence!

3 When You did awesome things which we did not expect,
You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.

4 For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear,
Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,
Who acts in behalf of one who waits for Him.

5 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,
Who remembers You in Your ways.

Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,
We continued in our sins for a long time;
Yet shall we be saved?

6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our wrongdoings, like the wind, take us away.

7 There is no one who calls on Your name,
Who stirs himself to take hold of You;
For You have hidden Your face from us
And have surrendered us to the power of our wrongdoings.

8 But now, Lord, You are our Father;
We are the clay, and You our potter,
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

9 Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord,
Nor remember wrongdoing forever.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.

3 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

4 O Lord God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?

5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

7 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.

17 And so will we never turn away from you; *

give us life, that we may call upon your Name.

18 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; *

show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 just as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: Mark 13:24-37

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven.

28 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: as soon as its branch has become tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 32 But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

33 "Watch out, stay alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. 34 It is like a man

away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay alert. 35 Therefore, stay alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 so that he does not come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 What I say to you I say to all: ‘Stay alert!’”

The Gospel of the Lord

**On December 3 we celebrate the life of Francis Xavier, Missionary to the Far East.
Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.**

Francis Xavier was one of the great missionaries of the Church. Born in Spain in 1506, he studied locally before taking up university studies in Paris in 1526, receiving a master’s degree in 1530. While in Paris he met Ignatius Loyola and, with a small group of companions, they bound themselves together for the service of God on August 15, 1534, the beginning of what would later become the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. After further theological study, Francis and Ignatius were ordained together in 1537.

As the nuncio to the east for the King of Portugal, John III, Francis went to India, arriving at Goa on the western coast in 1542. He later moved south and traveled as well to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and the Molucca Islands, now Indonesia. For seven years, he labored among the people there, winning many converts to the faith, baptizing, teaching, and trying to ease the suffering of the people. His efforts were not always well received. New Christians were often abused and enslaved and sometimes killed.

In 1549, Francis moved on to the southern region of Japan and immediately set about learning the language and preparing a catechism to support his missionary efforts. In time, he moved north to the imperial capital, Kyoto, and made an effort to see the Mikado, the Japanese emperor. Civil strife and localized resistance made Francis’ Japanese efforts difficult, but he came away from the experience with a deep sense of respect for the people and their culture.

After returning to India in 1551, Francis was appointed the Jesuit Provincial for India, but he was not satisfied only to maintain the work already begun. He immediately set out for China, at the time closed to foreigners, in hopes of launching new missionary efforts there. He set up camp near the mouth of the Canton River in August 1552, hoping to secure passage into the country. Later that year he took ill and died, at age forty-six, on December 3, 1552. His remains were later transferred back to Goa, India.

Let us pray: Loving God, you called Francis Xavier to lead many in India and Japan to know Jesus Christ as their Redeemer: Bring us to the new life of glory promised to all who follow in the Way; through the same Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**