

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 8, 2016

Dr. Scott Hagley, Assistant Professor of Missiology

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 22:1-13

1 Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. 2 The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people. 3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; 4 he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. 5 They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present. 7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it." 9 They asked him, "Where do you want us to make preparations for it?" 10 "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there." 13 So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

1 As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. 3 Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. 4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. 5 Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? 6 And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, 10 and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, 12 so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

DEVOTIONAL

This past spring, I went to Home Depot to pick up some cedar boards for a garden box. It was only after digging up the front yard and assembling the raised bed that I recognized the risk involved with a front-yard garden. While the sun-saturated site was ideal from a gardening perspective, the very publicness of the garden made me uneasy, for gardening is something over which we have marginal control. This summer we prepared the soil, we planted the seed, we watered the ground, but mostly we waited and watched in a very public sort of way as neighbors and strangers passed by with advice, judgment, and comments.

Our New Testament texts wrestle with this very Advent-like dance between preparation, anticipation, waiting, and the ways this dance can go wrong. As Passover nears, Judas takes drastic action to force change in the status quo and betrays

Jesus. Paul cautions the Thessalonians to avoid jumpy and anxious conclusions regarding Christ's second coming. The fulfillment of God's promise, the coming of Christ, can be received, anticipated, and prepared for, but not produced. This Advent, may we learn to cultivate soil and prepare, may we learn to anticipate and wait. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel.

PRAYER

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease,
And be yourself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!
Amen.

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