

Sunday, December 5, 2021
Second Sunday of Advent



Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastoral Intern Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace of the word made flesh. Amen. Let me be honest, three weeks ago, I was in front of you preaching about the tragedies that we often experience in our life. One thing that I didn't include in that sermon is what happened the night before. I was a little worried I was going to be preaching for you with a black eye. We had just come home from a trip to Costco and the girls and I were bringing in the groceries, and a neighbor from down the road came to our driveway while he was in the middle of a psychotic break. He ended up attacking our car, our home, and assaulting me.

The young man's mom asked me to restrain him while we waited for the police to arrive. Instead of having a restful night at our home, we spent the night giving statements to the police, comforting the girls, and thinking about what to do with our damaged minivan. The next day, I was here with you and the Gospel was the destruction of the temple.

Two weeks ago, I was sharing that same sermon about tragedy with our siblings in the Spanish ministry. That afternoon, many families from our community, many of you, my family and I experienced another difficult moment. This week, a difficult moment surrounded many families in Michigan after a shooting in a high school. Many temples came crashing down. Stressful times experienced by many students and families in West High school this week. Stressful times experienced by many families in a building that is about to collapse in Waukesha. If I continue mentioning it I will not finish today. Each of us experienced difficult moments.

Today, I am again in front of you to preach to you about what Jesus represents for our lives, especially in these moments of great pain and great anguish. For almost a month, the word tragedy has been present. I ask for the grace of all of you if the message of this day incorporates things that you have already been hearing about a lot in these past weeks. For me it is impossible not to include these thoughts.

I was born in Piedra Azul, a very rural area located on the slopes of a volcano called Chaparrastique. The land on the side of Chaparrastique is covered with ravines created by running rainwater as it erodes the land away. Every time there is a heavy storm, the neighborhood is put on alert for fear of the water overflowing the ravines. This is especially dangerous during nighttime storms. Every year, the ravines get deeper and wider.

When I was a boy, there was a ravine between our family's house and the house next door. The ravine gradually got bigger each storm. As our yards were being consumed by the growing ravine, both families knew we had to do something so

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we decided to build a retaining wall. Well actually the project was done by the other family, my family had no money. Do you know what happened the next time it rained? The ravine became a little bit smaller. Years later, there is still a small ravine to move the rainwater, but it no longer removes the land. We couldn't stop the rain, but we could prevent more damage in the future.

Brothers and sisters, we are on our second Sunday of Advent, and as usual on this Sunday the liturgy always presents us with the proclamation of John in the wilderness announcing the coming of the Lord. A voice cries out, prepare the way of the Lord, the Messiah is coming. Waukesha feels like the desert today, right?

Children of God, today's gospel tells us every valley shall be filled. Every mountain and hill shall be made low. Something new is about to sprout from what has been cut down. From the ruins, a new city surrounded by hope, peace, joy and love is about to be built. God came to us in the person of Jesus to reveal himself. The people of Jesus's time were completely lost due to the oppression and misery under the Roman Empire, but it was in this desolate environment that God revealed himself to us.

Moses did not come to God. Abraham did not come to God. John the Baptist did not come to God. You heard that; it was God who came to them. We are not the ones who come to God; it is God who comes to us. He comes to accompany us in this life in this world. Even in those moments when we feel that something is failing in our valleys, even when we experience tragedies in our community.

We have to remember that God did not come down to be temporarily with us. God is still with us today. God descended to be hand in hand with us in those moments of failing and physical and emotional breakdowns that many times damage our Hope and peace. He comes to fill the ravines.

As we walk through this season of Advent in a broken-hearted community, may the light of Christ illuminate our lives and our families in this season as we continue our preparation to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

May the grace and peace of the Word made flesh be with you all. Amen.