

First Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2023

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem, “The Sicilian’s Tale.” In it, King Robert of Sicily is sitting in his royal box at the cathedral, dozing through a Christmas cantata. Suddenly, he sits up straight. He’s caught a few words of what the choirboys are singing!

The king’s Latin isn’t so good, so he asks a nearby monk to translate. When the good brother gets to the part about the mighty being cast down from their thrones and those of low degree being lifted up, the wily king remarks: “’Tis good that such seditious words are sung in Latin, lest the peasants understand them.”

King Herod might have felt the same way if he had been eavesdropping on Mary when she burst into song while visiting her cousin Elizabeth. “My soul magnifies the Lord,” she sang, “and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47). Her song became known as “The Magnificat.”

She went on to sing, “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (vv. 52-53). She was carrying the Christ child. She can feel a revolution in her womb! God has chosen to become a human, born in humble circumstances. It signals the dawn of a new era: the downtrodden finally have their day. Salvation for the righteous and the poor is at hand! Mary’s song is a beautiful hymn, but it also is a song of solidarity. It reminds us that the Christmas story is not primarily a cute story of a baby being born in a manger to the adulation of angels and shepherds.

No, it is much more! God is shaking the heavens and the earth! Change is coming!

Back to Longfellow and King Robert. God is offended by Robert’s pride, and installs an angel in his stead as king, and relegates Robert to the role of court jester. When Robert insists that he is the true king, he is denounced as a madman or a joker. Only when he confesses, “Thou art the king,” is he restored to his throne.

As we begin our observance of Advent, let us ask if we are prepared to be a part of this new kingdom that God in Christ has announced to us!

—Timothy Merrill

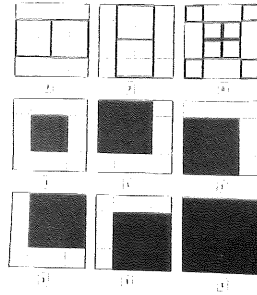
Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for planting the seeds of your kingdom here on Earth. Help us to be sensitive to your will. Amen.

*Blessings on the First Sunday of Advent,
Lisa & Pastor Ben Motz*

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Sunday:** 1 John 3-5
Monday: 2 John, 3 John, Jude
Tuesday: Revelation 1-3
Wednesday: Revelation 4-6
Thursday: Revelation 7-9
Friday: Revelation 10-12
Saturday: Psalms 139-141

Solution to last week's puzzle: there are 18 squares.



?

What number should replace the question mark in the box to the right? *Answer to the right.*

6	2	4
9	4	5
8	7	1
4	1	?

ANSWER: 3. The numbers in columns 2 & 3 equal the number in column 1.

SWITCHEROO

DIRECTIONS: Change the position of only one letter in each word below to make a new word.

EXAMPLE: MINUTE, MINUET

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. HOWEVER _____ | 2. LINKING _____ |
| 3. ENERVATE _____ | 4. CUTTLE _____ |
| 5. TRUMPETS _____ | 6. DEIFIED _____ |
| 7. STOPPING _____ | 8. TICKLER _____ |

CRYPTOGRAM: PROVERBS 27:1

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
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O O T O T O T T O O O
 T D F D O E D B P O B E D Y O O D U D H H D L
 O O O O T O
 Z D H G D Y T D F D O N F D L L R B O
 B T B G U B G E H A F M

ANSWERS: 1. Whoever, 2. Inking, 3. Venerate, 4. Cutlet, 5. Strumpet, 6. Edified, 7. Toppings, 8. Trickle. **Cryptogram:** Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.