

## First Sunday in Advent:

### Prophets as Prodders

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1 Kings 18:17-19, 30-40

Luke 3:7-9

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### Synopsis:

Advent begins today. Advent is a fancy word meaning *coming*. We believe that God in Jesus *has* come—first coming—God in Jesus *will* come again—second coming. We live between God’s first and second coming. What is this coming all about?

The Old Testament points to the coming of God in the prophets to prod the destructive powers of this world. God shows up through the prophets and in the person of Jesus to destroy that which destroys. God’s advent/coming forces a choice:

Will we choose the destructive powers?

Will we choose the life-giving power of God?

### I.

### It’s Coming

Mal 4:1 See the day is coming, burning like an oven

### Christmas play a few years back: Repeated line

“It’s coming, can you believe it’s coming?”

\*What’s coming?

\*Why are we celebrating?

1. Presents = material well-being?

E.g. 25 shopping days left until Christmas

Black Friday

2. Jesus get away = comet clan in RSF, get away

E.g. Night Before Christmas

*I in my kerchief and Ma in her cap*

*Had just settled down for a long winter’s nap*

*When out on the lawn there rose such a clatter*

*That I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter*

### What’s coming? Hint in Malachi 4: READ

-last prophet in OT

-Notice Moses (Torah) and Elijah (Prophets)

-Point: Prophet Elijah points to Day of Lord coming

Whatever the coming of Jesus is all about, it has to do with the prophets and the Day of the Lord. Let’s learn through the prophets, so that we can be ready for the day when Jesus comes.

## II.

### God Comes in the Prophets

1 Kings 18:1 The word of the LORD came to Elijah saying . . . “Go present yourself to Ahab.”

#### Story of Elijah: 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2

-prophets always associated with kings (Samuel-Kings)

-kings = our poor choice, which God accommodates

-Highlights:

raises widow's son

confronts Ahab over Naboth's vineyard

runs away to Sinai/Horeb

taken away to God in a whirlwind of fire

-Climax is 1Kings 18 = confrontation with Ahab/Baal

Tell the Story: TURN TO 1Kings 18

#### Characters:

Baal = *Master*

God is life force, material well-being

Power, wealth, sex, death

Icon/idol is bull = life-force

\*What Americans worship

Ahab =

Northern king in Israel 9<sup>th</sup> cen BC

Wife Jezebel (from Tyre) Baal worshipper

Story: Mt Carmel Showdown

\*Kings have chosen Baal = material well-being

E.g. Movies

*High Noon* Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly

*Independence Day* Will Smith

Who is Master? Baal or Yahweh

Make a choice? Can't limp (vv 21, 26)

#### Elijah story became the paradigm for prophecy = Day of Lord

-God shows up and confronts the powers of this world

-Sirach 48 (2<sup>nd</sup> cen BC) Elijah is paradigm

-Malachi 4 = God will show up again through Elijah

#### Why Important for us:

Idolatry will destroy us

Service to this world's powers will destroy us

What destroys you?

-addictions

- envy
- parent abuse
- sexual abuse
- violence
- endless cycle of material search
- loneliness
- fear of death

E.g. Idolatry looks sexy = smoking commercial dress-up

### III.

#### **God Comes in Person**

Luke 3:4 Prepare the way of the Lord

When Jesus came, people were expecting God to show up  
Is this the Day of the Lord?

#### Story of John Baptist and Jesus intertwined

- Luke 1-3 two people: prophet and king
- Jesus ID's John with Elijah:
  - Gospels begin with John (Luke 1-3)
  - Jesus says John is Elijah (Matt 11)
  - Transfiguration: Moses, Elijah, Jesus (Matt 17)
  - Malachi 4 fulfilled

#### Advent is God showing up in person = Day of Lord come

1. Presents = material well-being = NO (Baal)
2. Get away = take us out of here = NO (Gnostic)
3. Prophets = confront powers here = YES
  - e.g. Earliest prayers of Christians
  - 1 Cor 16:22 *maranatha* Aramaic = Come Lord Jesus
  - Rev 22:30 *erkou kurie jesou* Greek = Come Lord Jesus
  - = confront the powers that destroy

### IV.

#### **Make a Choice**

1 Kings 18:21 If the LORD is God, follow him

Advent is God coming to destroy powers that destroy

Prophets prod the people to make a decision about powers

1. Elijah = don't limp between opinions
2. Jesus = turn and believe the good news

We live *between* the first and second *coming* of Jesus

- coming* is about destroying the powers that destroy
- between* is the time for choice between powers

You have a choice this Advent: 3, really 2 options

1. Yes for Baal = go for material well-being power

- eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die
- serve the powers that destroy us
- material, abuse, sex, death, etc.

1. No opinion on powers = Agnostic = I will wait and see

- not really an option
- can't limp between the two (1 Kings 18:22)
- e.g. Bart Ehrman on John Daley Show
- "Agnostic? Isn't an agnostic an atheist with no \_\_\_\_\_?"

3. Yes for Jesus = God who destroys the powers that destroy

- He's coming
- "It's coming, can you believe it's coming?"

Greet Jesus this Christmas see the powers that destroy destroyed

- Season of Baal
- Read the texts
- Read the hymns
- Ponder what difference this makes in your life