

## Second Sunday of Advent 2022 A

'Tis the season for decorating homes and putting up Christmas lights. Perhaps we all have times in life like this. [LIGHTS] ... Like the strings of lights when first purchased, things come out of the box neatly arranged and all working, but in the rush and hurry, relationships and responsibilities get wrapped around each other into a tangled clump, a bulb burns out, and the whole string goes dark.

Of course, chaos enters our lives in many other ways. Problems at work and in family, the serious illnesses and the inevitable aches and pains of our bodies, the rising price tags and dwindling bank accounts, the troubles of our communities and our world ... all of these and more weigh upon our spirits and slowly erode our energy and sometimes our hope that things can get better. Selfishness, greed, envy, pride, anger, and cunning always bring chaos into our lives and relationships, and it can feel like the whole string goes dark.

The Book of Genesis tells us that the first thing God does in creation is to ***bring order into chaos***. We experience some real echo of this whenever we enjoy the harmony of a rich chord in music; the spectrum of colors in a summer sunset; the proportion of a perfect sculpture or the arch of a bridge. While tastes differ, we respond naturally to beauty and order with relaxed minds and even muscles. It's why we want to listen to our favorite music over and over, or display works of art or words that inspire us.

***Isaiah's vision for the coming of the Messiah is the restoration of that original order and harmony.***

Creatures who had become natural enemies, part of the each other's food chain, live in mutual peace.

While the Gospels give us no accounts of Jesus reconciling cows and bears, many Christmas traditions have grown up about Jesus in the manger among the animals, as even His obscure birth points to His mission of reconciling all things. He does so by His presence and much more, by His dying and rising that

overcome the greatest form of chaos we can know, the death that undoes everything we have been in life and makes everything go dark.

Chaos makes deep inroads into our lives and history, but *we know with certain faith that it will not have the last word*. As Isaiah tells us, we have some part to play in resisting this chaos by making straight the way of the Lord in our own lives. We cannot ourselves reconcile all the suffering and disorder in our world, but that is precisely why we rejoice that God sends us a Redeemer to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. *Jesus made Himself as we are, entering this chaotic world, so that we can become as He is, called to life with God forever.*

As Advent continues, we can each do three things to change chaos into the order God desires. First, to pray sincerely for, and look for, the coming of Jesus – at the end of time, certainly, but even now, to will His presence wherever there is need for healing and peace. Second, to strive to live in peace and order ourselves ... *to make those first steps to alter our words and choices* that lead to selfishness, pride, anger, or whatever cause of disharmony in our circle of relationships and makes the light of faith go dark. And third, to spend some time with a pile of papers, a drawer or closet, even a string of lights ... somewhere in our lives where there is clutter and mess. Straighten up one spot at home or work, and we are on the way to creating a straight path for the Messiah, Who comes to restore what chaos takes away, and to bring light, for ourselves and those around us, when things go dark.