

UHPC WORSHIP—1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT & HOLY COMMUNION:

DECEMBER 02, 1018

SERMON TOPIC: "THE LESSER IS THE GREATER"

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. ...Blessed are those who mourn. ...Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. ... Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you falsely on my account..." REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDINGLY GLAD FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN." (Matthew 5: 3-11) The Beatitudes are not part of the Gospel reading for today... officially. But it fits in with our sermon topic:- "THE LESSER IS THE GREATER." Another lesson that points to this theme of "lesser being greater," comes from Luke 22: 24-28 where Jesus taught His disciples about the difference between the principle of kingdom greatness vs. the greatness on earth. One of the actual texts for this week as given in the Lectionary, comes from Jeremiah 33: 14-16, which speaks of a GOOD PROMISE FULFILLED BY THE LORD, JEHOVAH OUR GOD. It refers to David and the Covenant God made with Him to give to him an eternal Son to sit upon the eternal Throne of Righteousness. It says in V.15- "IN THOSE DAYS, I WILL CAUSE A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH TO SPRING UP FOR DAVID. ...He will be called- "THE LORD IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. ... HE SHALL EXECUTE JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAND. IN THOSE DAYS JUDAH WILL BE SAVED, AND JERUSALEM WILL BE SECURE." This One would be He who would leave His glory in heaven to come to earth and become the LESSER as an example for us. From the time Adam and Eve fell into the sin of disobedience, the Heavenly Father promised a REDEEMER to restore humanity to wholeness and to lead us back to a right relationship with our Creator. This would not be accomplished according to the world's standards but according to the principles of the heavenly kingdom as demonstrated by Christ Jesus.

David was the least among his eight brothers but became the most admired and greatest king of his time. Yet he was also a flawed human being. He was anointed and appointed by the LORD God, to rule over Israel. He had great grace and favor upon his life, his mission, and his kingdom, but could never reach the height, width, nor depth of the ETERNAL SON GOD PROMISED TO GIVE TO THE WORLD OUT OF HIS (DAVID'S) OWN LOINS. Even John the Baptist came closer to the Perfect Son of God, than David did, for John recognized that he, John, needed to DECREASE so that Christ Jesus might INCREASE. John saw Jesus and proclaimed Him as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. King David prophesied about Jesus but did not see Him. However, John beheld Him with His own eyes and recognized Him in His soul and spirit. Even before Jesus came out of Mary's womb John recognized Him from Elizabeth's womb and leaped for joy.

In Luke 21: 25-33, the Gospel tells us about the coming or return of the "Son of Man." He was the One who came to earth through a Virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit in her womb. He was and is the One who was born in a stable and laid on straw or hay in a trough for a cradle. His earthly father —Joseph was not yet married to his mother- Mary, so that was a scandalous thing in those days. This was the One of whom Jeremiah prophesied that the GOOD PROMISE of GOD WOULD BE FULFILLED before He came to earth. After leaving earth He is expected to return. Luke's Gospel tells us that there would be signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth when His return is near. Those who are observant and "tuned in to the Word of God, will know these signs and fix their focus on being prepared for His return and for the Judgement everyone will have to face. They will know that their redemption is near because there will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars; nations will be confused, the seas and its waves will roar, people will faint because of what will be happening in the world around them. The

heavens will be shaken. THEN THEY WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. We look forward to this day with great expectation, and we continue to worship, pray, serve, and celebrate as we wait. When the Believers see these things beginning to take place, Jesus tells us that we are to stand up and raise our hands for our (final) redemption is near. While Jesus does not give us date and time, He does give us the signs of the season when we should prepare and know what is happening. Let no one be deceived and say this has been said for ages and has never happened so have no fear. Remember, that if He does not come in our life time, be assured that we will still have to face Him even after passing from the earth. He will come back to judge the living and the dead.

Using the fig tree as an example, Jesus reminds us that just as it blossoms and produces fruit and we know that summer is near, so we are to watch and respond to the seasons he just described that will manifest when HE--Christ Jesus, the Righteous Branch, will return to judge the world. Therefore, He urges us to be observant, be prayerful, be watchful, and to be alert so that we are not caught off guard and unprepared. We are to pray more fervently so that we will have the strength to escape the things which are to take place in that awesome day when the Son of Man returns. Paul talks about the strength and empowerment of the heart that comes from a life of prayer as the Thessalonians overflow in generosity, love, and faith toward him and his disciples as well as to other churches. Through the discipline and practice of prayer, Paul and his disciples offered up thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father on their behalf. He goes on to say that He prays for them that their hearts may be kept strong and in holiness before the Father at the COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (v. 13) Paul was looking forward into the future for their ultimate and eternal wellbeing.

When we speak of THE LESSER BEING THE GREATER, even the unbeliever can attest to the truth that no other human being has ever walked the earth who was more meek and humble of heart than JESUS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. YET, AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WAS NEVER ANYONE BEFORE HIM OR AFTER HIM WHO WAS AND IS AS GREAT AS HE. He was the GREATER WHO BECAME THE LESSER for our sake. When in Luke 22, the disciples of Jesus were arguing about who was the greatest among them, he told them that it is not so in the Heavenly Kingdom as it is on earth. He taught them that in the Kingdom of Heaven, the GREATEST BECOMES THE SERVANT AND DOES NOT LAUD IT OVER OTHERS. THE PERSONNEL POLICIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS ACTUALLY THE REVERSE OF THE WORLDLY POLICIES. No one has ever impacted the world as this baby born in a manger, and no one ever will. HE WAS THE GREATEST (Not Mohammed Ali). He became the Lesser so that those who are the Lesser on earth may become with Him -the Greater in the heavenly kingdom.

SO, WHAT DOES THIS TELL US WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE REBORN FROM ABOVE? WHAT DOES THIS HEAVENLY POLICY TELL US ABOUT OUR ATTITUDES AS DESCRIBED IN THE BEATITUDES? The Scriptures tell us that Jesus humbled Himself unto death on the Cross, that He might pay the debt of sin we all owed. Jesus yielded to the will of His Father saying: "Thy will be done—not mine." Even as David, the Great and anointed king of Israel fell short by virtue of the weakness of his humanity, so have all people fallen short of the glory of God, and all need mercy. We are privileged to have the GOOD PROMISE OF GOD FULFILLED ON OUR BEHALF THROUGH OUR OBEDIENCE AND FAITH IN GOD OUR CREATOR AND THE FINISHED WORK OF THE SON—YESHUA HA-MESSIACH/ JESUS THE MESSIAH. WE BELONG TO THE NEW COVENANT IN HIS BLOOD. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM AND FOLLOW HIM, WILL KNOW WHEN THEIR REDEMPTION IS NEAR. AS WE MOVE ANOTHER YEAR CLOSER TO THAT DAY AND TIME, WE CAN SEE THE SIGNS IN THE SUN, THE MOON, THE STARS, AND THE SEAS. WE CAN SEE THE UPHEAVAL OF THE

EARTH PROPHESED WITH QUAKEs, FIRES, STORMS, TEMPESTS, AND NATIONS IN ABJECT CONFUSION. Just before coming to worship this morning, I turned the T.V. on and saw the story of a young couple in Japan doing missionary work as teachers. They were caught in a massive earthquake, followed by a horrifying Tsunami and yes... the melt down of a nuclear plant resulting from the devastation and upheaval of the earth and the sea. Through a number of what seemed like "God-ordained" scenarios, this couple was saved and brought back together. They eventually got married and had a son. I feel I was led to this program to bring this sermon into reality for me and for us today. We tend to just forget and pass by the signs Scripture tells us about and move on to the next thing. I believe we are being urged to TAKE HEED AND MEND OUR WAYS. WHAT I SAW TODAY WAS A STARK IMAGE OF WHAT THE SIGNS OF THE COMING OF THE LORD WILL LOOK LIKE. I believe the Holy Spirit brought it to my attention and now to yours, to help us see how real and how near we are to the return of Christ to the earth to judge the living and the dead.

SO, BROTHERS AND SISTERS AS WE LAUNCH OUT ON ANOTHER ADVENT JOURNEY, LET US UNDERSTAND THE SEASON THAT WE ARE IN AND PRAY MORE FERVENTLY, BE MORE WATCHFUL, LEST WE BE DECEIVED AND CAUGHT BY SURPRISE WHEN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SHALL DESCEND IN THE CLOUD WITH HIS SAINTS AND ANGELS ACCOMPANYING HIM. ALL EYES SHALL BEHOLD HIM IN THAT GREAT AND AWESOME DAY. LET US KEEP WATCH AND HOPE THAT WE WILL BE AT THE WELDOME TABLE WITH HIM WHEN HE RETURNS. IN THE END, THIS IS WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO EVERY DAY AND EVERY WEEK. WE WANT TO BE READY WHEN HE COMES. WE WANT TO BE COUNTED AMONG THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS WHO ARE WELCOMED INTO THE KINGDOM. THE GREATER WHO IS THE LESSER WILL PRESENT US FAULTLESS BEFORE THE HEAVENLY FATHER. AND BECAUSE OF HIS SACRIFICE AND INTERCESSION FOR US, WE TRUST WE WILL BE GIVEN OUR HEAVENLY REWARDS. SO, THOUGH IT MIGHT GET A BIT DIFFICULT HERE ON EARTH, WE CONTINUE TO PERSEVERE, FOR THROUGH THIS LITTLE BABY, born as the LESSER IN A STABLE, WE SHALL OVERCOME AND BECOME GREATER IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WE LOOK FORWARD TO A LAND WHERE WE NEVER GROW OLD. WE HAVE THIS ETERNAL HOPE HE WHO IS IN US IS GREATER THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD. THIS HOPE WE HAVE IS ETERNAL AND CAN NEVER DIE NEITHER DOES IT DISAPPOINT.

THEREFORE, I PRAY THAT WHEN CHRIST RETURNS, "ON THAT GREAT GETTING UP MORNING" WE WILL ALL BE CAUGHT UP TO MEET HIM AND NONE WILL BE LEFT BEHIND. I PRAY AS PAUL PRAYED, THAT YOU WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR HEARTS IN PRAYER, OVERFLOW WITH LOVE AND FAITH TOWARD ONE ANOTHER AND SUPPORT THE SPREADING OF THE GOSPEL. I PRAY THAT OUR HEARTS WILL BE STIRRED WITH COMPASSION FOR THE LOST SOULS WHO DO NOT KNOW THAT THERE IS A HEAVEN AND A HELL AND THAT THEY CAN CHOOSE THEIR ETERNAL DESTINY. WE PRAY, TO ABBA/ FATHER THROUGH CHRIST JESUS THE SON AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER, THAT SOULS WILL BE SAVED, AND MANY WILL TURN TO CHRIST AND BE REDEEMED BY HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD BEFORE THE TRUMPET SOUNDS AND THE DOOR IS SHUT. WHILE THERE IS TIME, LET EVEN THE BELIEVERS EXAMINE OUR HEARTS AND GET OURSELVES BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK. LET US CAST OFF OUR EXCUSES, FOOLISHNESS, ARROGANCE, PRIDE, REBELLIOUSNESS, DISOBEDIENCE, AND SIN OF EVERY KIND. MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT HELP US TO FOLLOW THE POLICIES OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM WHILE BEING ALERT TO THE DECEPTION OF THE WAYS OF THE WORLD THAT TELLS US WHO IS GREATER. IN GOD'S KINGDOM—THE LESSER IS THE GREATER. JESUS LIVED IT AND DEMONSTRATED THAT THIS IS THE WAY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. HE IS THE SHEPHERD WHO CAME TO LEAD US IN. HE IS THE GREATEST WHO BECAME THE LEAST IN ORDER TO SAVE US ALL FROM SIN HELL AND DESTRUCTION. In Him we live and move and have our being. In God

we trust. Like that young couple in Japan, may we be spared from the wrath to come. We believe and declare it done for we ask it in the strong and powerful name of Christ Jesus, our SOON COMING KING. Hear our prayer O Jehovah our God in Christ Jesus and answer us speedily we ask, that we might testify of Your steadfast love and faithfulness to a distracted and lost world. Encourage and embolden us to bear witness of His coming this Advent and beyond. AMEN.