

## **A Weekly Banquet**

Lessons and Carols, Dec 15

### *A Banquet*

Each week, St. Peter's serves a banquet; of words; God's words. The Gospel Book is carried in procession, lifted high for all to see. Later, a portion is broken off and fed/read to us. Before that, portions of the Old Testament and the New Testament Letters are read. In between, we respond with a Psalm or two. All this is food, not only for thought, but also for the soul. Good news that God still loves us. . .and has things for us to do. A light on our path and assurance of help from the Holy Spirit. We come in famished and go out filled, nourished, and energized.

### *In Advent*

It's a conflicted season. There are the incessant liturgies of the mall and on-line shopping; the drum beat of "black Friday." Also, the liturgies of the stadium; will the Eagles make it? The liturgy of the church year is hardly mentioned; a hobby for the few. The readings from Scripture tell a different story than the ads and hype of the mall and stadium. We'll hear what God did to bring in a new earth and heaven and finally sing "The hopes and fears of all the years/Are met in thee tonight."

We're going off the Revised Common Lectionary this week, for "Lessons and Carols." The readings we will use are:

First Lesson from Isaiah 40:1-8

Second Lesson from Jeremiah 23:5-6

Third Lesson from Zechariah 9:9-10

Fourth Lesson from Haggai 2:6-9

Fifth Lesson from Isaiah 35:1-6

Sixth Lesson from Luke 1:26-35

These lessons select elements in the developing story of the Bible. This week, instead of questions for each reading, I'm going to suggest a strategy that you can use as you read each lesson. You'll need your Bible to look them up.

First, read the lesson from the Bible. Although it may be familiar, imagine you are reading/hearing it for the first time.

What is happening? Who are the characters in this part of the story? What does it say about them? What images/metaphors are used? Are some of them new to you? What do they bring to the story? What have you noticed for the first time?

As you move to the next lesson, what elements are added to the story? New characters? facts? images/metaphors? How do they flesh out the story? Is anticipation building for the next lesson/stage in the story?

When you reach the Gospel lesson, how does the story develop here? Any new characters? Did you expect them from what the other lessons have told you? Are you surprised at how the story is seeming to change, and yet is offered as the goal all along?

When you hear these lessons in church on Sunday, they will be accompanied with songs and prayers, deepening your own response.

—Larry Sibley