

The 1st Sunday in Advent Year A

ST. LUKE'S CATHEDRAL: NOVEMBER 30TH, 2025

The advent of Advent with its emphasis on the coming of the Son of Man has the ability to produce different reactions among us Christians.

There are some who prefer to skip these early Advent Scripture dishes altogether and focus on the main event on Christmas Eve and the birth of Jesus. Round about now we have on our minds hanging the greens (its already done at B-H), decking the halls, Christmas concerts, Santa Claus parades, and getting to the almighty Black Friday sales.

There are other Christians who think that the whole emphasis on Christ's second coming is much ado about nothing believable. The 'shall come again' language of Scripture and the Apostles' Creed are enough for many to shake their heads in disbelief – questioning why it is taking so long for Jesus to return.

And of course, there are other Christians who believe that Christ's second coming is at the very heart of the gospel. They begin their day, as Karl Barth is said to have enjoined, by taking their Bible in one hand and their newspaper in the other and reading them side by side. The hermeneutical stance of these Christians is different than what Barth intended, for they are not really interested in interpreting life in the light of what we know about God as God is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. Rather they search the Bible for signs of the end times, and they search the newspapers to see if those signs are in view. There are clergy who avoid preaching on these texts altogether.

The temptation for those who are dismissive of last things is that they become apathetic, while the temptation for those who are always on high alert about them is that they become over-anxious about the end days. There are in our midst denominations of Christians who spend their days stockpiling the necessities of life in their homes so they will be ready when their predictions about the end times come true.

May I be so bold as to say to us this morning that apathy and anxiety are not gospel words. The chosen passages of Scripture this week draw us away from the posture of despair to faith instead of apathy and hope rather than anxiety.

On this first Sunday in Advent, the start of a new liturgical year, we are reminded that as we live and move and have our being in Christ, we are called to be Advent communities of Faith, Advent Communities of Hope, Advent communities of memory, and Advent communities of alertness. “It is now the moment for you to wake up from sleep” writes Paul to the church in Rome, with Jesus’s Matthew joining the chorus exhorting us to “Be ready”

To be sure there is judgment in God’s story, but there is also much grace there in a story that moves us forward towards a time when God will make all things new.

You see, it is God, and not the powers that be that ultimately hold sway. The powers of greed, fear, money, authority, shame, war, hate, all whisper to us that we can’t resist them. But surprise – all of those powers have been defeated, as we heard last week by the bloody cross of Christ.

We are given this season of Advent to attend to liturgy, to pastoral care, to Christian formation – all of which help assure us that we are God’s people – redeemed from sin and shame, and the story in which we live and move and have our being is a good story that has its genesis and its ending in God.

In Advent we don’t stay away from the scary texts but rather in them learn to trust without fear that our future is on God’s hands. That means even the things we cannot control; even when we do not know the details of what is yet to come.

The kind of faith we are called to live is the one where all our hope is founded in God. It is a faith that calls us to look forward without apathy or fear because we are not afraid to look back at what God has already accomplished through Jesus Christ. We wait in hope, because we wait in memory. How then shall we wait?

Paul again gives us a clue....”Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Which leads me into my motto for the coming year which is from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians 3: 17, ***“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”***

Paul, the prisoner, pens these poignant powerful words in the form of a prayer. He is literally on his knees. Because of Paul’s trust in God’s purposes, he is confident that his suffering is for the glory of God. Paul is filled with joy and gratitude that all followers of Jesus are part of God’s own family. There is no ‘us’ and ‘them’ in that family. There is no insider or outsider. All are part of the family of God.

Paul’s prayer is a prayer that could be said by any pastors who love their people. And his hope then, and mine today, is that those hearing his words would be completely taken over by Christ. He prays



that we will be strengthened in our inner most being from the inside out, by the power of God's Holy Spirit. This is not a matter of becoming stronger in ourselves, but by having Christ dwell in our hearts, not grudgingly like Harry Potter's aunt and uncle who relegate their nephew to a cramped cupboard under the stairs, but joyfully, welcoming Christ into the whole of our being. Can we hear these words of encouragement for us today.

In the verse that I have chosen for my motto, Paul uses a botanical metaphor, describing the need for the church to be rooted and grounded in love. I see in my mind's eye the 300-year-old Burr oak tree in our garden, its roots so deep that they continue to feed the tree, even in times of drought. This is the depth of love we reach into when we allow Christ to come into our lives. And then Paul prays that they will know, really come to know, the breadth and length and height and depth the love of Christ, so they may be filled with the fullness of God.

In this new year, let us root and ground ourselves in Christ and allow Christ's love to fill us to overflowing and change us from the inside out. It may take time, and we may not notice any difference at first. But in God's Kairos time, not ours, our lives will be transformed.

Conversations will change.

Relationships will realign.

Where we spend our time and money will relocate.

Our prayer lives will deepen.

Commitments to the powers that be will shift.

So it is when Christ moves into the hearts of Christians, when all we do and say is rooted and grounded in this love that is so amazing, so divine.

Let us enter this Advent time as an Advent people believing and trusting that beyond our small hopes, beyond our small lives, God is at work, fulfilling the plan laid out for all eternity. To God be the Glory.