

## *From the Pastor's Desk, .....*

Advent, a season of four Sundays, opens the church year. The word, Advent, consists of two Latin words: ad -- venire, "to come to." Advent's message is that God in Christ is coming to the world. This coming may be: 1) A past experience. God did come in Christ at Christmas. The prophets' promise was fulfilled in the Babe. 2) A present experience. God may come to you this Christmas in terms of rebirth, either for the first time, or a renewed birth in deeper dimensions of reality. 3) A future experience. Christ will return unpredictably at the end of the world. "He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead."

Advent promises the sure coming of the Lord, its message is "prepare." The Lord is coming whether the world is ready or not. For those unprepared, his coming means judgment. For those ready for his coming, it means salvation. How does Advent suggest that we prepare? 1. Repentance -- forsake the sins of the world for a godly way of life. 2. Prayer -- pray for the coming of Christ, for he shall save. 3. Patience -- his coming may be delayed. Watch and wait, for his coming may be sudden.

"Jesus is coming soon" is not the whole message. There is much more to the Gospel than that. Advent challenges us to hear and believe the promise of Emmanuel, God with us. That challenge doesn't call us to be so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good, to become so starry-eyed over the future that we overlook the present. Advent reminds us that God often breaks in to our lives unexpectedly. We cannot know the time or the day of our next encounter with the holy. Neither can we predict whether that meeting will be a joyful experience of forgiveness and peace, a call to repentance and responsibility. But we can realize that it will come and attempt to be ready and actively waiting.

Here's a poem based on the poem about Christmas called 'Twas the Beginning of Advent'. It will tell you a little bit about this season we celebrate.

'Twas the beginning of Advent and all through the Church  
Our hope was all dying we'd given up on the search.  
It wasn't so much that Christ wasn't invited,  
But after 2,000 plus years we were no longer excited.

Oh, we knew what was coming no doubt about that.  
And that was the trouble it was all "old hat."  
November brought the first of an unending series of pains  
With carefully orchestrated advertising campaigns.

There were gadgets and dolls and all sorts of toys.  
Enough to seduce even the most devout girls and boys.  
Unfortunately, it seemed, no one was completely exempt  
From this seasonal virus that did all of us tempt.

The priests and prophets and certainly the kings  
Were all so consumed with the desire for "things!"  
It was rare, if at all, that you'd hear of the reason  
For the origin of this whole holy-day season.

A baby, it seems, once had been born  
In the mid-east somewhere on that first holy-day morn.  
But what does that mean for folks like us,  
Who've lost ourselves in the hoopla and fuss?  
Can we re-learn the art of wondering and waiting,  
Of hoping and praying, and anticipating?  
Can we let go of all the things and the stuff?  
Can we open our hands and our hearts long enough?  
Can we open our eyes and open our ears?  
Can we find him again after all of these years?  
Will this year be different from all the rest?  
Will we be able to offer him all of our best?

So many questions, unanswered thus far,  
As wise men seeking the home of the star.  
Where do we begin how do we start  
To make for the child a place in our heart?

Perhaps we begin by letting go  
Of our limits on hope, and of the stuff that we know.  
Let go of the shopping, of the chaos and fuss,  
Let go of the searching, let Christmas find us.

We open our hearts, our hands and our eyes,  
To see the king coming in our own neighbors' cries.  
We look without seeking what we think we've earned,  
But rather we're looking for relationships spurned.

With him he brings wholeness and newness of life  
For brother and sister, for husband and wife.  
The Christ-child comes not by our skill,  
But rather he comes by his own Father's will.

We can't make him come with parties and bright trees,  
But only by getting down on our knees.  
He'll come if we wait amidst our affliction,  
Coming in spite of, not by our restriction.

His coming will happen of this there's no doubt.  
The question is whether we'll be in or out.  
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."  
Do you have the courage to peer through the lock?

A basket on your porch, a child in your reach.  
A baby to love, to feed and to teach.  
He'll grow in wisdom as God's only Son.  
How far will we follow this radical one?

He'll lead us to challenge the way that things are.  
He'll lead us to follow a single bright star.  
But that will come later if we're still around.  
The question for now: Is the child to be found?

Can we block out commercials, the hype and the malls?  
Can we find solitude in our holy halls?  
Can we keep alert, keep hope, stay awake?  
Can we receive the child for ours and God's sake?

From on high with the caroling host as he sees us,  
He yearns to read on our lips the prayer: Come Lord Jesus!  
As Advent begins all these questions make plea.  
The only true answer: We will see, we will see.

Let us pray...Christ Eternal, a season of wonder and watching and waiting is upon us. We grow impatient, but help us to remain focused on You. We await your final shalom-your reign of peace....amen.

Yours in Christ,

*Pastor Michele Kaufman*