

Sermon for Sunday 2nd December 2018

Today we begin the season of Advent. Now in our faith tradition this is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the coming of the Christ child as well as the return of Jesus at the second coming at the end of time as we know it.

In Advent our liturgical color is purple, which indicates a penitential season that speaks of fasting, faith, patience and trust.

It is a gentle time to be loved, and to love who and what is coming into the world.

The word *Advent* is a version of the Latin word meaning “coming”.

The liturgical season of Advent marks the time of spiritual preparation – a time when we are invited to turn inward for the Lord’s coming. This inner preparation, nourished by prayer, silence, scripture and the sacred music and rituals of the season, is essential if we are to celebrate in the manner worthy of the holy commemoration of our Lord’s birth.

I read somewhere during the week about the importance of our liturgical calendar, and how in fact the entire scope of the mystery of Christ is experienced at ever-deepening levels of assimilation as we celebrate the liturgical seasons and their various feasts year by year. The liturgy does not just offer us a look in to our worship service, it invites us to participate in the event itself, to really get into it and absorb its meaning and to relate to Christ on every level of his being as well as our own.

This developing relationship with Christ is the main thrust of the liturgical seasons and of the capacity to engage all our senses: our will, intellect, memory, imagination and body. The season of Advent, is therefore the beginning of the liturgical journey not only of Christ’s coming but of our coming into him.

The gospel passage this morning heightens our imagination, for it talks about that future time known as the Parousia, a Greek word for what is commonly known as the Second Coming of Christ at the end time.

The Parousia is a revelation or the breaking through of a presence that has been continuous throughout history. It is not the return of a God who has been in exile or absent. It is the time of revealing what is already here.

As I understand the gospel this morning, Jesus is saying to us, – read the signs –be alert, don't get bogged down with things that aren't important - keep with me, live in me, know me, be like me, recognize me in your daily life, in yourselves and in others - and in the reading from Thessalonians there is that beautiful spirit of Christian loving community that Paul writes about.

Jesus also says to us today: Stand tall in your knowing, raise your heads for your redemption is drawing near. Truly I tell you this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.

We are invited to enter the fullness of God in Christ this Advent. Invited to know Christ through intimate prayer, finding ourselves in him and he in us. We are to let Jesus pray in us and little by little our thoughts and requests and thanksgiving become more aligned with Christ. Our prayer changes from being about technique and more about relationship.

This advent we are invited into this prayerful relationship through quiet time – even in our busy life - to let Jesus be in us – pray in us – live in us in what we do, so that when he comes to us born in that stable at Bethlehem, he also in some way is born in us - with the blessings of divine life that sustains and strengthens us for our life as disciples in this world.

Let us pray

Dear lord, as we begin our advent season we are filled with hope.

May it grow in us as do you in us. Keep us close, as we keep you close in heart mind and body.

Bless us this season and always. We worship you dear Lord, love you, and bow down before you. In gratitude we pray.