

A Word from Our Transition Pastor . . .

Why do we have Advent? *“I don’t know, it always just comes along,”* or, *“I don’t know, no one ever told me.”* I have heard these questions and others a number of times. Especially this one: If Christ has already been born, what is this Advent waiting about? Have we forgotten about his birth?

Strangely that is part of the answer. It has to do with his birth into our hearts each year. Our hearts are drowsy and forgetful, tired out by the anxieties of daily life. Maybe we distract ourselves from our troubles by working very hard, or becoming depressed, or becoming fascinated with (you name yours) drink, or sex, or out-of-control emotions, or gambling, or email, or golf, or surfing the web, or pride, or, or, or. Whatever it is for you, the very clear message of Advent is, *“Settle down for a while.”* Open the door just a crack to let God in.

The Church has a liturgical strategy in the Advent Sundays’ readings. Each week’s First Reading is the carrot: usually positive, a promise of good. The Gospel is the stick.

Take the First Reading each Sunday. It always reminds us of the promise God has made to his people: Righteousness and justice will come to the earth. Security! The day of the Lord will arrive, though long delayed! Peace in our day! What a lovely thing it is to desire such a time. Is it too good to be true? Is it just pious thought? Read the First Reading each week and ask yourself those questions. Spend time with them. Pray to God for help. The Psalm will help you. It asks God to make known his ways to us, to guide us and teach us.

The Second Reading usually urges us to put God’s promise of peace into action, even if we are not yet sure what it means. Love others and be loved.

Ah, and then the Gospel. It tries to wake us up. *“But I am perfectly awake,”* you say. Alright then, go ahead and read the Gospel. It is the

“stick.” Signs in the sun, moon and stars, nations in dismay, the roaring of the sea and the waves, people dying of fright, and the Son of Man appearing in the clouds with power and great glory. Or John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, Repent, and make way for the Lord! And finally, we hear of a saving God coming to set his people free!

Are you ready for it? Let yourself imagine it what this might be like. Picture it scene by scene and don't worry about being exact. Just experience it. Will such a shakeup really happen literally? We do not know. Maybe much worse is to come, judging from the state of the world today. Do you live without fear of terrorist acts, of proliferating nuclear weapons, of a crash of the entire economy or the greed that fills so many hearts to overflowing?

If you can say “You are right, I am afraid of these,” then pray that Christ be given birth in your soul, and in so many others in this world that need it so badly.

Welcome to Advent!

Pastor Weeks