

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



November 27, 2022

ADVENT

here now and coming soon

by Drew Downs

The Advent Season offers us a two-for-one. While we are most aware of the preparatory character of Advent, we may be less aware of the *being* character of the season.

As we live in a culture that prepares for Christmas with a fervor that clearly rivals our preparing for Christ, we get the idea of working ahead to get all things in order. We aren't strangers to preparing for the long-expected celebration.

This activity is, however, not purely about *then*. That time in the future. It's also about the now. Who we *are*.

The stories we hear in Advent guide us toward a *now* that prepares us for a *then*. This matches a view of God's Kin-dom that exists as both a now and not-yet: at the same time. Living fully in the now. And that loving generously here, like it's the Kin-dom, is essential. Because it, too, *is* the Kin-dom.

ORDINARY TIME

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

"Gathering more gifts and gratitude"

The wisdom we've gleaned about financial stewardship in the church has been cultivated over decades by experts, run through systems of analysis, practiced in varieties of contexts, and refined into practices offered to the wider church with such assurance that anyone can just do this stuff and the church will run with it.

I don't question the truth of that. I'm also wondering if it matches us. Or our moment. Things are changing. And so are we.

I've long sought to avoid being the one to ask for money. It feels gross. And I've been to churches where talk of giving to the church is a constant from the priest or pastor. Which then means we don't *really* deal with it, either.

This year, I'm asking for pledges from you directly. Pledges of Wealth, Works, and Wisdom.

- Help fund the church: which includes salaries, utilities, and ministries.
- Give and act generously: to make the light of Christ known in our community.
- Share from who you are: because you have much to offer.

We know how to give. And we know how to love. In 2022, we're adapting to new practices in the world. Our lives are changing. And the church is no different.

So we aren't just collecting "gifts" as a euphemism for money. We're collecting potential. We want to grow and adapt and be present to this community *now* **and** *in the future*. This takes the stuff every one of us can offer. Yes, that includes wealth. And works. And wisdom. We are better with all of us giving the all of us.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

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FOR SUNDAY

First Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Matthew 24:36-44

"For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

Reflection

We begin the Advent season with apocalyptic predictions: about the end of things, reconciling creation, and how upsetting such a moment would *have to be*.

I suspect most Christians don't actually care for that reminder. We prefer not to think about our own deaths, let alone that of those closest to us. People are famously talking-about-death avoidant.

This avoidance is also famously unhealthy. We all do it, know it's bad for us, and then do it anyway.

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Yet still we lash out at those who remind us. Like doctors reminding us to eat better or loved ones encouraging us to quit bad habits or get therapy. Exposure to what we wish to avoid yeilds anger and anxiety.

The church knows that confronting death is central. So we do it. Even when we'd rather not.

When Jesus compares the time he's speaking of to the time of Noah, there is little doubt that we fixate on the flood. But he is referring to the time *before* it. When people are carrying on in the world like nothing's the matter.

The reference may be ominous. It no doubt is. But it is also a reasonable warning.

In the time before the deluge, the people weren't just minding their own business and then BAM! God flooded the world. They had so distorted the world that there was only one good person left in all of creation.

So, in other words, Jesus isn't warning us about some terrifying thing God will do to us, as if we have no role to play in this drama. He is specifically naming the importance of recognizing our relationship to that world. Because, unlike them, we can change, prepare, survive.

Our purpose as followers of Jesus is, after all, to be like Jesus, align our vision with his, and prepare the Kin-dom here. So that when the reconciling events occur, we are already living it, embodying it, sharing it. That the Kin-dom is happening within and through us.

This week, we're reminded of that work and that reconciliation. That God's dream for humanity is better than the world we live in now.

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