



First Sunday in Advent December 1st, 2019

Actively Waiting Melancholy Amid Joy & Joy Amid Melancholy



Welcome to the First Sunday of the Christian Year. Christians around the world begin the new year with the season of Advent. In basic terms, through Advent (*advenire – to come*), we adopt a posture of *waiting for, actively waiting* for the Christmas event – the birth of Jesus. But what does active waiting mean?

First, active waiting in this season of Advent is not simply about waiting for the child Jesus – “God among us”, in isolation. In the New Testament, Jesus is the expression of the kingdom changing people, changing relationships between people, changing society, transforming history. Advent and Christmas affirms what Judaism and Christianity hold together, each in their distinctive ways: that history carries meaning, because of God’s involvement in it.

Second, and by extension, the joy of Christmas, the joy of the birth of Jesus as the paramount sign of the reign of God among us, is always mixed with melancholy, because the reign is here among us to an extent, but not completely. We look forward to a redeemed and renewed world, but this renewal is still only partial, waiting for us to play our role. In the Christian life, as in life generally, joy and melancholy are not opposites, nor mutually exclusive, but intimately tied up with each other.

Third, Advent and Christmas are tremendously significant seasons, for they require from us serious thought and action about our world, not simply sentimentality – a debased currency, to which Christmas is frequently reduced.

GATHERING

Announcements

We sing

I will give thanks to You
O Lord, among the people
I will sing praises to you
among the nations
for your steadfast love is great
is great to the heavens
And your faithfulness
your faithfulness to the clouds

Be exalted, O God
above the heavens
Let your glory be over all the earth
Be exalted, O God
above the heavens
Let your glory be over all the earth

(TiS 726, I will give thanks, Brent Chambers)

Invitation and Greeting

In the name of God, the Father
In the name of the Son
In the name of the Spirit

The Lord be with you
And also with you

We are here
in the name of Jesus Christ

Hymn: Tell out my soul (TIS 161, Woodlands, Timothy Dudley Smith)

Lighting the Advent Candle of Hope

Hope Rising amid Human and Divine Struggle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHmQinli5Ug>

Candle is lit

People of God, come, for the light of hope draws us together.

From our solitude, we are called into community;

From our brokenness, we are called into wholeness;

from our fading, we are called into fullness;

and from our wandering, we are called to the path of new life.

Let us pray:

Holy Presence, we open ourselves today to you,
to the light and grey of life;
to the wisdom and the wondering;
to the now and the not yet,
of your presence.

***Guide us into this new season,
for we are a people on a journey,
often afraid of the unknown,
so afraid that we fall into silence***

In our worry and despair, for you O God, we wait...
We wait...

When tears threaten to overwhelm us, we wait...
We wait...

When we long for a fresh start and newness of heart, we wait...
We wait...

When we consider the state of our world, we wait...
We wait...

When we have done all that we can, for you,
O God, we wait...
Amen

Introduction to the Theme

The Peace

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

First Thoughts about Living Hopefully

“The most tragic form of loss isn't the loss of security; it's the loss of the capacity to imagine that things could be different.”

Ernst Bloch, “The Principle of Hope

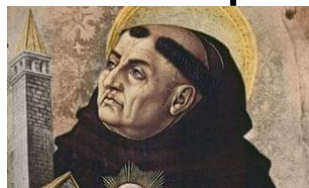


Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future. **Nelson Mandela**



Hope is an acquired habit of thinking, attained through practice and self-discipline

Thomas Aquinas



If I were immersed in constant melancholy, I would not be who I am.

Elie Wiesel



Isaiah 2:1-5 (The Message)

Pam Tickell

Isaiah 2:1-5 is usually considered a very late addition to the material associated with Isaiah, possibly having been written after the exile of Judah and Jerusalem in 587BCE – 150 years after the prophet Isaiah lived. As we read this piece from the Hebrew bible we do so from our perspective as Christians, awaiting two things: the coming of the Kingdom marked by peaceable-ness and justice between peoples, and Christ's birth, God for us. Central to this is the idea of which Isaiah is so clear: that our history, with all its events and complexity is never divorced from God's eternity. What we do today, in society or as individuals, is related to that time beyond time. And what we say or believe about the latter bears heavily on the way we live and perceive our life in the present.

2¹⁻⁵ The Message Isaiah received regarding Judah and Jerusalem:

There's a day coming
 when the mountain of GOD's House
 Will be The Mountain—
 solid, towering over all mountains.
 All nations will river toward it,
 people from all over set out for it.
 They'll say, "Come,
 let's climb GOD's Mountain,
 go to the House of the God of Jacob.
 He'll show us the way he works
 so we can live the way we're made."
 Zion's the source of the revelation.
 GOD's Message comes from Jerusalem.
 He'll settle things fairly between nations.
 He'll make things right between many peoples.
 They'll turn their swords into shovels,
 their spears into hoes.
 No more will nation fight nation;
 they won't play war anymore.
 Come, family of Jacob,
 let's live in the light of GOD.

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Romans 13:8-14 (NRSV)

Pam Tickell

Paul assumes the Romans share with him the view that history is reaching its climax and presumably this includes the return of Christ, the resurrection and the day of judgement. It didn't happen that way and here we are two thousand years later! Yet Paul's exhortation stands in its own right whether we expect the approaching end or not. It employs the imagery of night and day, partly to speak of the approaching day of the Lord, but primarily to contrast light and day as ways of being and behaviour.

The context of Paul's comments in these closing sections of Romans is concern with the way the Romans relate to one another. In particular he emphasises love as the basis for such relationships and has just alluded to the fact that where such love exists all that matters in the Law is fulfilled (13:8-10). In chapter 14 he will go on to apply this to what it means to live in a community where people have differing values, particularly in the way they apply scripture, in this case in relation to foods. Into this context he then introduces his comments about the approaching day.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; ¹³let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Matthew 24:36-44 (The Message)

Hazel Ruskin

This reading is apocalyptic in nature and because of that raises questions in Christian ethics about what appears to be the violence and capriciousness of God. The reading itself has raised questions among scholars, especially in more recent times, as we become more sensitive to the way religion and religious consciousness has and can become vehicles for human violence, justified through an appeal to divine violence. More positively however, this reading, like the Hebrew reading we have just read, reminds us that as we approach Christmas and the celebration of the birth of Jesus, that our history, with all its events and complexity is never divorced from God's eternity, God's reign in Christ. The whole of our life is caught up in the eternal, redeeming work of God in Christ, and the reign of Christ finds its expression in the ordinary flesh and blood existence of the least of all human life.

³⁶ "But the exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven's angels, not even the Son. Only the Father knows.

³⁷⁻³⁹ "The Arrival of the Son of Man will take place in times like Noah's. Before the great flood everyone was carrying on as usual, having a good time right up to the day Noah boarded the ark. They knew nothing—until the flood hit and swept everything away.

39-44 “The Son of Man’s Arrival will be like that: Two men will be working in the field—one will be taken, one left behind; two women will be grinding at the mill—one will be taken, one left behind. So, stay awake, alert. You have no idea what day your Master will show up. But you do know this: You know that if the homeowner had known what time of night the burglar would arrive, he would have been there with his dogs to prevent the break-in. Be vigilant just like that. You have no idea when the Son of Man is going to show up.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

**Christmas Bowl Clip: “Actively Waiting with Zimbabwe”:
Neyevero’s Experience of the Conservation Farming Program of
the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Christian Care**

https://www.actforpeace.org.au/www_AFP/media/Christmas-Bowl/CB19-Resources/CB19-02-FirstSundayOfAdvent.mp4

Some Thoughts:

Offering

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

EUCCHARIST

Hymn: Shout to the Lord (TiS 738, Shout to the Lord, Darlene Zshech)

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Let us lift up our hearts.

..... ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

.....***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,
for your love is forever
and you have raised the crucified Christ from the dead.

You created all things and placed Christ as the cornerstone.
You made your grace known to Israel in the wilderness,
and through your prophets you pledged
your everlasting love and constant faithfulness.

You anointed your child, Jesus,
with the Holy Spirit and power,
and he went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed by evil.
He was put to death, hung on a tree,
but you raised him on the third day,
and allowed him to appear, first to Mary Magdalene
and then to your other chosen witnesses.
So now we praise you within the gates of justice
and raise our glad songs of victory
for you have become our saviour
and hidden our lives in Christ in glory.

Therefore we join with all the company of heaven in their song

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth
are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.***

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest***

Through him, in him and because of him,
We affirm the Church's faith

***Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.***

Institution

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며

뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
 땅에서도 이루어지이다.
 오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
 우리가 우리에게
 죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
 우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
 우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the bread of joy
Who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life,
Who revives the faint-hearted

Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive.

Agnus Dei

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Word made flesh,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation
grant us peace.

Communion

Distribution

We come forward as a family to partake of the elements together at the Communion Table. The cup on the right-hand side as you face the table is unfermented grape juice and the cup on the left-hand side is alcoholic wine.

Prayer after Communion

God of heaven and earth,
you make us one in Christ.

Inspire us with new vision of the sabbath
becoming a community marked by the freedom to serve.

Give us strength to walk together

In Christ's name

Amen

Prayers of the People

Annette Burne

The one who prays ends each petition with the words, ***may we be people of hope***, and the congregational response, ***through how we live and what we do***

Closing Hymn: In Christ Alone

(Words and music by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, copyright © 2001 Kingsway Thankyou Music)

“In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;

For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is life!

Let us live hopefully, not just optimistically;
Actively waiting for the incarnation of God among us,
Actively waiting for the kingdom

Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

**Going Out: Shalom (TiS 778, Somos del Señor, Elise Shoemaker
Eslinger)**

We sing twice

Musical Postlude

Pianist:

Rosemary Osborne

