

Reflection for November 29, 2020

The Meaning Is In The Waiting

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!

And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake!

We place our hope in God. We sing of a life beyond life and a future good beyond imagining: a new heaven and a new earth, the end of sorrow, pain, and tears, Christ's return and life with God, the making new of all things. We yearn for the coming of that future, even while participating in eternal life now.

God will strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

Let us pray:

God of light, tear open the clouds and illumine the darkness of human injustice, conflict, and division. Restore our relationship with you and one another through the love of Jesus Christ. May we ready ourselves by letting go of the things that divide us and instead seeing the sacred worth and belatedness of the other. Prepare our hearts to live in your reign that is to come by living into the kingdom that is already upon us. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart ready to receive. Amen.

In a reflection on waiting, Paula Gooder writes: "Advent calls us into a state of active waiting: a state that recognizes and embraces the glimmers of God's presence in the world, that recalls and celebrates God's historic yet ever present actions, that speaks the truth about the almost-but-not-quite nature of our Christian living, that yearns for but

cannot quite achieve divine perfection. Most of all, Advent summons us to the present moment, to a still yet active, a tranquil yet steadfast commitment to the life we live now. It is this to which Advent beckons us” (The Meaning Is In The Waiting, p. 21).

During Advent, we look for the signs of Jesus coming afresh in our lives as a reminder that Jesus will come again, just as he promised. Jesus tells two parables: The first is about the fig tree, the second about the homeowner who goes on a trip leaving his servants in charge. This second parable is really a parable about the church. We are to attend to the signs of Jesus’ presence every day, not as those who dream while they’re asleep but wide awake.

How does this affect the way we enter into this Advent season—a season known for expectation, preparation, and waiting? Are we merely waiting for baby Jesus to be born, or are we waiting for something more? How can we be constantly on the lookout for places that desperately call us to make known God’s forgiveness, generosity, justice, abundance, and love? “What if we entered into this Advent season already out in the fields like the shepherds, ready to receive the angel’s message that the time has come, or like the astronomers, constantly searching until they spot the star that will guide them to what they have been looking for” (Theresa Cho)?

The Lord has come—he will come again. The life of the Christian church is located and lived at the intersection of these two advents. And in the meanwhile—“the Time Being,” as W. H. Auden calls it—we stay awake, like the doorkeeper, by watching for signs of his presence in the most unlikely places and the most unlikely people. It will take us by surprise every time, but we will be ready to recognize him when he makes himself known. The One who has called us and has equipped us with all the gifts needed for our ministries, will also strengthen us to the end, so

that we too may be found in faithful witness on the day of Christ's return.

“There is a place where Christ *always* comes to meet us. He has promised us his presence in the sacrament of communion. Here, the doorkeepers may receive refreshment for the next watch, for in the body and blood of the Lord, he has guaranteed his presence not only in the unforeseeable future, but “now in the time of this mortal life. We are Advent people. Together we receive Christ's very self for this Advent life. We return to our posts with gladness, having been fed and upheld by the One Who Comes. Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel” (Fleming Rutledge, Advent, p. 267).

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