

Sermon for Sunday, December 4, 2022

Second Sunday of Advent

“Morning is Coming!”

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Decorah, Iowa

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day](#)

Beloved People of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

How are you?

How are you *really*?

How is your body? Your mind? Your spirit?

When you look at your life these days, what do you see? What do you hear?

Are you experiencing life-giving, holy disruption?

Do you feel unsettled by unwelcome changes?

Where do you sense hope?

Is your weariness cured by a good night's rest; or is it deeper, more difficult to tend?

What do you need?

Advent is a season for truth telling. It's a season that asks *How are you?* and refuses to let you leave with a hurried *fine*.

Advent looks you in the eye, reaches out to touch your shoulder, pulls you in for a strong hug when your eyes begin to brim with tears.

Advent sits with you in the silence as you struggle to express your deepest yearnings, your most peace-stealing fears.

And on those days when Christmas lights bring a gentle joy, when music makes your heart soar, when a simple kindness stirs hope and warmth enough for the coldest days ... then Advent rejoices with you. It invites you to see and to hear even more signs of God's love for you, assures you that yes, this is God's dream for the world, this is the way life is intended to be, this is the way life will be ... peaceful, joyful, abounding in hope.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, Advent promises, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

For us today it might be less surprising to see a wolf live with a lamb than to see partisans work together for the common good. It might be less surprising to see the leopard lie down with the kid than to see our hurting families get along. We need this shoot to come out from the stump of Jesse, abundant life to emerge once more from the very place where it was cut down. We need to see that death and destruction is never the end in the dream of God. In the realm of God in which we live, a stump is a thing of promise, a new beginning, the perfect place for God to work. Advent asks *Where are the stumps in your life and in the life of the world? What has been cut down? Removed? Destroyed? Broken? Look closely, Advent whispers. Those are the places where God is at work. New life will emerge there. Watch. Wait. Trust. Believe.*

Jesus is coming, Advent proclaims. Jesus is coming. There's a Carrie Newcomer song that comes to mind. She sings:

From the muddy ground comes a green volunteer.

In a place we thought barren new life appears.

Morning will come whistling some comforting tune, for you.

You can do this hard thing.

Advent, too, proclaims: Morning is coming, the dawn is near. Jesus is coming, morning is coming whistling a comforting tune for you.

That tune is the song of the angels:

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace.

It's the song of Mary:

God has brought the powerful down from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.

It's the song of Zechariah:

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

It's even the song of John, the biting song that ultimately brings comfort by way of conviction:

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

By now I'm accustomed to John's colorful song. What still surprises me is how people flocked to hear him. Maybe when we're in the wilderness we can finally welcome the truth-tellers. We can see that we need to turn around. The call to repentance can be heard because we see that what we're doing is not working, our lives need to change. In the wilderness of our lives, we need a call to repentance and the burning up of all the chaff to which we cling so stubbornly. We need Jesus.

Jesus is coming to clear the threshing floor that is this world. All the fear, injustice, violence, and disease that keep this world from abundant life will be burned. Jesus will bring a most holy disruption in the form of this fire. Jesus himself will tend to the fire, and he will not let the wheat be swallowed up by the flames; he will not let you be destroyed by his judgment. As the Gospel of John sings, Jesus comes not to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Morning is coming, whistling a comforting tune for you. A new day is dawning. This promise of new possibilities is not a commercial jingle touting salvation through spending. The promise of new possibilities is grounded in the Word of God made flesh, the Word of God embodied and alive within you and beside you.

Jesus is coming and is already here in the assurance of forgiveness, in the peace we share, in the bread and wine that makes us full with love, and hope, and joy. Whatever you need is here.

Advent stands fast and sings for all the world to hear, sings for you to hear:

New life is sprouting.

A new day is dawning.

Your savior is coming, is here.

A new song of hope can arise within you.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.