



PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

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Advent Heartache

Carla Mae Streeter, OP

We have entered the season of Advent. Its color is purple, but not the penitential purple of lent. It is the magenta or sapphire blue purple of longing. Advent is about the heartache of hope's longing to find the One my heart loves.

The human family knows deep-down what it wants. It longs for peace. It longs for collaboration. It longs for healing. It longs for the communion that authentic relationship brings. 'Advent' means to come or coming to. So the obvious question is "When?" When will these things come, and who will bring them?

Various religious traditions have various answers. The answer given down through the ages in the Christian community called Church has been that only God can bring these things, and God will do this in the broad expanse of time: in the past, in the present, and in the future. But to answer this longing, God will have to enter time. God will have to endure its limitations, be bound by its step-by-step process, suffer its ongoing development. And God did just that. God entered time and wrapped God's own word in flesh. God asked a young girl to give the Word a body, and when she said yes, God pressed human DNA to God's Self, never to be parted.

So, the phases of time sometimes become a blur during Advent. God came in the past; God is coming in the present; and God will come in the future. We ponder all of them. The texts of Advent will take us back to when the Word became flesh in Mary's womb. The texts will point us to the future when the great risen King will come to judge the world. But most challenging of all, will be those texts that awaken us to the realization that he comes daily, every twenty-four hours, when we least expect him, when we might just miss him. So the people of God are filled with longing to see him in the day-to-day, and are filled with the heartache that comes from knowing we often miss him, and miss ministering to him. He wears a thousand disguises. He favors wearing the faces of the lowly ones, those who interrupt our lives, those who bother us with their defenseless need.

We shake each other from our unawareness. The texts try to arouse us to pay attention. And all the while the One we seek has long ago pressed us to his cheek. But our Advent is necessary, because we have been busy about many things, so distracted, in fact, that we haven't noticed his nearness, if we're honest. So Advent's longing heartache is all about a new noticing...he's here.

He came, you say, "Way back in history..."

or

No, he will be coming in majesty "...better be ready!"

but now, today, in mystery?

How do I 'solve' these surprises?

Ah!

With the heart's eyes...they will catch him in all his disguises.

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November 29, 2020 - Isaiah 64:1-9, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37

Isaiah cries out, “God has hidden from us.” Paul writes, “God will strengthen you to the end...God is faithful. Mark writes that after days of suffering, even the sun and the moon will be dark and the stars will fall from the sky, We would not be the first generation to wonder if these words are speaking of us. Is it now, O Lord? Mark writes, “Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. In darkness, waiting, we return to Paul’s encouraging words. “God will strengthen you to the end...God is faithful.” We trust in you, O Lord.

December 6, 2020 - Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11, 2 Peter 3:8-14, Mark 1:1-8

Isaiah proclaims God’s comfort, and when have we needed it more? Go up to the highest places and cry out the good news. Don’t be afraid. As God spoke tenderly to Jerusalem, so God also speaks tenderly to us. Peter too writes, “wait the new heavens and earth.” Are we waiting? Yes, indeed. Waiting once again for the birth of the Savior. Waiting for the inauguration of a new president. Waiting for greater immunity to the new Coronavirus. What are you waiting for? Let God speak tenderly to you as you wait.

December 13, 2020 - Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11, I Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28

Isaiah rejoiced heartily in the Lord, and proclaimed God the joy of his soul. As natural as the growth of plants in the garden will be the unfolding of justice and praise. A few verses later we read Isaiah’s words that God had hidden. As winter makes the garden fallow and the seeds and roots dormant under the ground, so at times it seems our hope is hid as well. Isaiah’s hope was hid. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Thessalonians that it is God who will accomplish it. In John’s gospel we read that the hope of the Jews was hidden among them and they did not recognize him. What hope hides among us that we do not recognize?

December 20, 2020 - 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16, Romans 16:25-27, Luke 26-28

The Lord gave King David rest. Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Him. The Lord builds houses for God’s people. The Lord raises up leaders, prophets and kings. The Lord sends the angel to Mary saying, “Fear not.” Mary was troubled in her heart, and the angel said, “Fear not.” Soon the skies will be filled with the voices of angels. “Fear not!” Surrounded by the winter of virus and vehemence, in darkness we rest, we wait, we rejoice. Here, born of Mary, is our reason not to be afraid. Come! Let us adore Him! Christ the Lord!

