

Advent is about Preparing for the Coming of Christ

Cycle B - 1st Sunday of Advent –November 29, 2020

The liturgical year is cyclical.

It begins with Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time and ends with the last Sunday of the liturgical year.

However the jump from Christ the King, the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, to the First Sunday of Advent, is not a restart--starting a new year fresh.

It is cyclical, meaning the theme of the last few Sunday's of Ordinary Time and the theme of the first few Sunday's in Advent are similar, one flows smoothly into the next.

We are not making the jump from the coming of Christ at the end of time, to the coming of Christ at the first Christmas 2000 years ago.

We need to focus on what unites them...the coming of Christ.

Whether we are preparing for Christ's second coming, or focusing on his first coming,

we are preparing for what they both hold in common—the coming of Christ.

Perhaps it will help to know that the English word "*Time*" can be translated from two Greek words.

The first is "*Chronos*" from which we get Chronology, which denoted a specific time...9:00am, noon, or 3:57pm.

However, in gospel the word time is translated from the Greek word "*Kairos*" which refers to a favorable time, a time when something special will happen.

It is not tied to a specific chronological moment,

but rather a special period,

and if we are asleep we will miss this special period..

The line from the gospel unites the two ends of the liturgical year.

"It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves his home and puts his slaves in charge, each with a particular task, and tells them all to "Keep Awake."

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Jesus is talking about himself, how he will be going on a journey---to his father...

and he will leave his slaves—his disciples--us—in charge.

He has left the care of the church, the world—to us.

And each one of us has a particular task.

When I was in grade twelve my mom and dad took an extended trip to Holland and left the house to myself and my two younger sisters.

It was expected that we take care of the house and it was expected that when they returned, it would be in the same shape as when they left.

Now we had the advantage, we knew exactly when they were going to return, but I also remember that we did not have to do a major clean up the day before they arrived.

We took our responsibly seriously.

My job was to do the yard work,

one sister was to do the grocery shopping and cooking,

and the other sister was to do the cleaning.

When mom and dad returned, everything was in order.

Although mom and dad were gone, we anticipated the day when they would return.
And more precisely we joyfully anticipated the day when they would return.
You see part of any event, celebration, holiday or festival, is the anticipation of its coming.
We spend most of May and all of June anticipating summer holidays.
We spend most to December anticipating Christmas.
Whenever we take a holiday, we research our destination
and figure out the 10 best things to see...so we don't miss them.
Whenever I plan one of my canoe trips, I break out the maps, create a menu
and make sure we have all the gear we need.
The old adage "getting there is half the fun" is certainly true.

With Jesus' coming we are not sure when his second coming will be...rather it is "*Kairos*" time.
The first disciples thought it would be in their generation... "*Chronos*" time.
In the last 2000 years there have been dozens of prophecies about when he would return...
"*Chronos*" time.
Each of them have proven false, because Jesus' return will be "*Kairos*" time.
Just as we make our preparations for him to come the first time,
we must make the preparations for him to come the second time.
And while we joyfully await his arrive and exercise our particular task.

The old adage "Getting there is half the fun" also applies to Christ's coming.
I have no doubt that when he comes in all his glory,
we will be rejoicing in a way that we would not have thought possible.
But that doesn't mean we cannot rejoice in the anticipation of his coming.
Helping a neighbour with a task...fills us with joy.
Donating to charity...fills us with joy.
Enabling Christ to learn the real meaning of Christmas...fills us with joy.
Buying a goat for a family half way around the world...fills us with joy.

I love the line "Each with a particular task."
As we await the coming of Christ, each one of us has a particular task.
Even though we have a particular task we need to ensure that we use it properly.
Let's assume that our particular task is to shovel snow.
We don't mind it, in fact it gives us a little joy.
But as the winter gets on, the particular task of shoveling snow can become a chore,
it is even possible that to begin to resent our particular task.
Or possibly whenever it snows, we immediately go get the snow shovel.
The task has become a habit, and we forget why we are doing it, we just make sure that we do it.

What happens in ordinary life happens in our Christian faith.
We can get into a deadly habit of our particular task...we go through the motions...
the motions of our faith life...but they have lost all freshness and meaning.
We don't hear the joy of the gospel anymore, it just goes in one ear and out the other.
The church in all its wisdom understands this.
That is why we have all the different liturgical seasons.
Each of these seasons wakes us up from the humdrum that we might find ourselves.
Jesus told us to "Keep awake."

But from time to time we fall asleep, and we need to be woken up.

This is what Advent is all about.

It wakes us from the humdrumness of life, so we can prepare for his coming.

This is especially true for this year.

Lately we have all been hearing the term “COVID fatigue.”

People are getting tired, our lives have been disrupted long enough, it is time to get back to normal...
but normal is still a long way away.

We cannot afford to allow Advent to slip by without affecting us in some way.

We need to allow Advent to snap us back into focus.

To focus on the coming of Christ,

his coming in the future in all his glory,

and his coming in all his glory 2000 years ago.

Advent is about focusing on the coming of Christ and not COVID fatigue.