

Advent 1C.18; Jer 33:14-16; 1Thess 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-36, *A Masterpiece in Coming!*

Advent, this is a Time of much Anticipation.

But, is this a Time to Fear or a Time to Hope?

Jesus himself says, “*People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect*

and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.” (Luke 21:26-27)

Looking outside our windows ... *the daily news* reflects a *daily reality* that has trained us well in disaster thinking. *Global Warming* is upon us: an arctic ice melt could flood New York, there are already stronger hurricanes and devastating wild fires. Moreover, terrorist attacks lurk in crowded places, earthquakes and sinkholes threaten, and nuclear weapons are proliferating in dangerous places. *The chief*

strategy for survival remains what it has been since biblical times: **run! & hide!**

(I remember living near Oak Ridge where many people actually built backyard bomb shelters fully equipped for a dark and unbearable future.) In 2017, the late

+ Dr. Stephen Hawking was urging the whole human race “**to pack our bags,**

... turn out the lights, and find a new planet”, and soon!

(Adapted, *Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas*, 2018, G. Glen)

And now this Gospel reports of cosmic upheavals preceding Christ's return in a glory-lit cloud that could scare even the heartiest believers today! What is really going on here? Despite these predictions we are NOT expecting a holocaust.

The final Advent of Jesus, *the Christ*, is not a disaster!

The prophet Jeremiah says, “*The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.*” Promise means something wonderful, something life-changing, something universe-changing

... is about to happen before our very eyes.

The Divine Artist through the gospel "signs" is actually painting a vivid picture of a new creation coming to birth which echoes Genesis. Indeed, it will bring changes as the *creative breath* of God blows us out our familiar reality... into a new World.

Yet, change is frightening. Isn't there an easier solution?

Couldn't God just spruce-up this old world as we know it, calm it down just a little, repair some of the cracks, make us better tenants? Probably, but God's love wants a far better future for us than we dare to hope for ourselves. A brand-new *Creation* with all the scars of sin & death transformed, is the least of God's plans. A profound communion in love *with God, with one another, and with all things* comes closer

... to describing the future we dare not imagine, but God has.

And that future *began long ago*, when *the Word of God* took out *full membership* in our humanity & our story. We remember the first coming of Jesus with joy, though it initiated life changes we still find hard. He has promised to return in the end,

2 bringing with him all the holy ones, *our own loved ones included*. Do we really want to slam the bomb shelter doors shut and hope for a return

... to the corrupt, polluted, and violent world we currently call, normal?

No! **Jesus, the Son of Man, coming in a cloud of power and great glory**, says *stand up and raise your heads!* My friends, *Redemption* is not a catastrophe!

We march to a different drummer singing, "**O come, O come, Emmanuel!**"

So as Advent begins, ask yourself who Jesus is for you?

Is he just a little baby in a manger? Or is he also *the Suffering Servant* who gave up his life to set you free from sin and death? Is Christ the *Lord of all Creation*, who is coming back to bring his faithful people to the Kingdom of the Father?

And if he is, what does that mean for us? (Adapted; *The Word Among Us*.Advent.o9)

What should we be doing right now?

Paul, who expected the imminent return of Jesus, told *the Thessalonians*, "**May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as**

we for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness..."

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) tells us how to work for this kind of holiness, "*Nor is it compatible with selfish love or physical self-indulgence....and so you will extend your love to your neighbors, doing for them the service you cannot do for God.*

You will visit the sick, help the poor, and console those who are troubled."

In other words, create genuine Hope with “hands-on” Love.

Advent is about change, about this world becoming something more through the challenging process of transformation. Is it worth the trouble? Listen to this

In 1954, the great French painter *Henri Matisse* died at 86. In the latter part of his life, arthritis crippled and deformed his hands, making it painful for him to hold a paint-brush. Yet he continued to paint, placing a cloth between his fingers to keep the brush from slipping. One day someone asked him why he submitted his body to such suffering.

Why did he continue to paint in the face of such great physical pain?

Matisse replied, “The pain passes, but the beauty remains.”

(Sower's Seeds of Encouragement, 5th Planting, B. Cavanaugh, T.O.R.)

At this Advent Liturgy of the new world let us remember that we celebrate *the Divine Artist* who is creating, with us, a masterpiece. Our struggles and pain joined

to his sufferings are creating a new reality.

Stand tall, a new World is coming and ***the Beauty*** will remain forever.