

December 3, 2017

“Watch and Hope”

Mark 13:24-37

Yesterday we had a lovely Christmas Fair and today is the first Sunday of Advent. We lit the first candle. Traditionally, this is the Sunday when we remember the Second Coming of Jesus in the end time. As some of you may know, Advent comes from a Latin word, Adventus, which means “coming.” During Advent we remember the first coming of Jesus to earth as an Incarnated One, who took human flesh. At the same time during Advent we remind ourselves of his Second Coming in the end time... and we lit the candle of hope.

So what is the Hope of Advent? What hope do we find in advent? What hope do we as the church of Jesus Christ proclaim to the world in this season?

That’s “Immanuel, God with us,” isn’t it? In the first coming, Christ came to the world to show us who God is, since nobody had seen God with human eyes, and to show us how much God loves us. It’s to the point of becoming human to be born to a lowly young couple in a humble place. God’s love was to the point of the Son of God dying on the cross with his arms stretched across on the cross to embrace us all.

Just before he ascended to heaven after the resurrection, Jesus promised to his disciples that he would be with us till the end of Time and said, “*And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:20)

We do not know when the end time comes, which only God knows, but Jesus promised his disciples that he would be back. At his last supper with his disciples, Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled...In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again** and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

The book of Acts records the words of the two white robed men, whom we assume are angels, when Jesus ascended to heaven “*Men of Galilee,*” they said. “*why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*” (Acts 1:11)

The hope of Advent is this: Jesus came; the same Jesus is coming to us *now* and he will come to be with us fully in the end. We will be never left alone *now* and also *in the future*.

So to me the image of hope Advent proclaims is this. (Light shone in darkness)
And not this (jolly Santa with many presents)

The Gospel of John proclaims. “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*” (John 1:5)

God’s light shines however dark the world around us may look. God’s light shone in the tiny town of Bethlehem in the darkness of night and the world that surrounded where Jesus was born. God’s eternal light continues to shine no matter how dark our world may look. This is the message of hope we receive in Advent and we pass on to others. We are the ones God chose to have God’s light shine through, offering hope to others. We will do so through Warm Fuzzies sharing, by joining Adopt-A-Family program, by collecting presents that will be sent to St. Joseph the Worker RCC Christmas Shopping program, by going Christmas caroling next Sunday and by sending Christmas cards to those who are home bound. We invite people to the following Christmas programs to share God’s light of hope with them: Coventry Christmas, a Grace Note Concert, offered by Jason Priset and his colleague, on Friday, December 16; Blue Christmas service for those who might be having a challenging time in this happy season, on Wednesday, December 20; the service with a Christmas pageant on Sunday, December 24 and Christmas Eve Candle Light Service.

May we receive the hope of Advent in this holy season. May the light of Christ’s hope shine through us. Amen.