

Advent, A Time Of Reflection

December 4, 2024

Matthew 25

No. 1

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, Dec. 25.

It is from the Latin word *adventus* – coming. The season holds two aspects of the Lord's coming:



1. We are reminded of His first coming, born in a stable in the first century.
2. We anticipate His second coming when He will establish His kingdom and rule in righteousness.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.

That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people.

So, as the church celebrates God's breaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation of that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

Have you notice how far this thought has been removed from the Christmas celebration?

The Spirit of Advent

Advent is marked by a spirit of:

- expectation
- anticipation
- preparation
- longing

of the coming Christ.

There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of this world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression.

Today,

It is being replaced, not by expectation of Christ but by instant gratification of stuff.

Three Hopes of Advent

1. Deliverance

It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance!

The Hope of:

2. Of A Righteous King

It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth, justice and righteousness over His people and in His creation.

We sing, "Joy to the World,

The Lord is come

Let earth receive her King."

The Hope of:

3. Judgment Of Sin

Part of the expectation also anticipates a judgment on sin and a calling of the world to accountability before God. We long for God to come and set the world right!

Advent is celebrated as a time of joy and happiness as we await the coming of the King.

That is why we sing "Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King."

While Lent is characterized by fasting and a spirit of penitence, Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers of submission, prayers for deliverance, prayers from those walking in darkness who are awaiting and anticipating a great light (Isa 9)!

Is 9:2 The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.

Mt 25 The spirit of Advent is expressed well in the parable of the bridesmaids who are anxiously awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom (Matt 25). There is profound joy at the Bridegroom's expected coming. And yet a warning of the need for preparation echoes through the parable.

The parable emphasizes the need for watchfulness in the event of a long delay in Christ's coming

When Christ returns, preparedness cannot be shared or transferred. Personal responsibility is emphasized

The parable of the ten virgins is a story about preparation. It is not a story about Christmas, but it is a story about the heart.

v.1 Jesus is saying, this is what heaven is like. It is like a bridal party that is waiting for the beginning of a wedding procession.

He divides the girls into 2 groups;

1. wise
2. foolish

One man said (Adam Clarke)

"Carelessness disposed them to drowsiness, drowsiness to sleep, deep sleep, which rendered them as unconscious of their danger as they were before inattentive to their duty."

Ancient, Eastern weddings usually began in the evening but this one had an unusual delay. (midnight)

I Thes 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

Mt 24:50 Jesus told a parable about a steward given charge over his house.

the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,

INTERPRETATION

Everyone must see to it that they are prepared.

What a dismal thing it is, not to discover the emptiness of one's heart till it is too late to do anything about it!

God alone knows how many are deceived this way.

Mt 25:13 *"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

This is why the Advent season is so important. It is a time of reflection.

APPLICATION

Be sure to take some time in the coming weeks to look deeply into yourself.

Do you have the righteousness of Christ?

Look around at Christmas.

Are you reminded that Christ came as Savior and He will return as King?

Reflection and consideration can make all the difference to having a wonderful and meaningful Christmas.

