

We cannot understand Advent apart from knowing who God is – and is not.

- God is not Santa Claus or fairy godmother – taking our wishes and making them come true
- God is not our buddy, taking our side whether we're right or wrong.
- God is not a superhero or wizard – using supernatural powers to do our bidding.

God is the Creator of the entire cosmos – and our Creator.

God is the Lord of the thunder and the calm.

God makes the earth quake and the oceans roar and stills the storm.

God makes war on the enemies of life and stops war against the righteous.

And it is not for us to understand how or why these things happen.

As David says in 1 Chron. 29: Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. ¹² Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength.

And Proverbs: *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *It will be healing to your body
and strength to your bones.*

And as Job reflected in chapter 9: *We'll never comprehend all the great things the Lord does;*

his miracle-surprises can't be counted. Somehow, though he moves right in front of me, I don't see him; quietly but surely he's active, and I miss it.

The good news of God's presence comes when we realize the we are at the end of our rope.

That we are not all-powerful, not in control.

The message of deliverance is good news when we acknowledge that indeed, we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.

There is no time like the present that needs to hear this truth.

Men in leadership behave badly – and it is tolerated, swept under the carpet, minimized, and dismissed as just “boys being boys”.

We have all become like one who is unclean.

We are beset by terrorism – not only the radical extremist kind, but also the terror of disease that attacks suddenly and without warning.

We all fade like a leaf and our sins, like the wind, take us away.

Those calling themselves Christians have turned away from God – failing to follow Jesus in lives of prayer, worship, learning and service to others each day.

Even our good deeds are like a filthy cloth because we are not committed to Jesus.

⁷ There is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You. For You have hidden Your face from us, and have given us over to the power of our sins.

O, Lord, that you would tear open the heavens and come down!

O Lord, that you would come and heal your people!

O Lord, that you would burst a hole in the barrier that separates us from you and come to put everything right – to put us right.

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Tonight there is a full moon – a supermoon.

I read about it in the paper.

I was told about it ahead of time.

I will prepare for it.

I will be looking for it – watching for it – eagerly seeking to get a glimpse.

That's what it is like to watch for Christ to come in glory – to watch for the heavens to be ripped open.

That's what Advent preparation is for.

God's Word tells us of Jesus' coming to deliver us from the all the suffering and terror of this world

God tells us that Jesus is coming to bring justice, to heal the broken, to save sinners.

And so to prepare, we turn from our ordinary sinful lives and look for him to come.

We trust in him because he has already come once to defeat sin and death forever.

He has already come – hidden in human flesh and blood –

Tearing open Mary's womb to be born

And on the cross, coming down to the depths of hell and the grave.

And then, on the third day, tearing open the grave in resurrection – paving the way of life for all who trust him.

Jesus has given us a sign of his presence and his promise to come again – the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

At the Lord's table, we are assured of Jesus' presence

– not in glory – but hidden under the forms of bread and wine.

--This sacrament does for us

what Jesus did in his earthly ministry

and what he will complete in his return in splendor:

- Jesus forgives our sins
- and grants us eternal life
- and salvation from the turmoil of this life.

So we prepare in humble repentance, and watch for his coming.

We trust in him because he has already come once to defeat sin and death forever.

We receive him in Holy Communion as our life and hope.

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Now the issue is whether we will continue to look for Christ to return in glory to reveal his salvation to all peoples.

It is a basic principle that wherever your feet point, your body will follow.

If you want to walk a straight line, your feet must be pointed straight ahead.

But most of the time – at least this is true for me – our spiritual feet are pointed left, or right, or backward.

In other words, we sin; we are headed in the wrong direction from Jesus.

Preparing for Jesus means to get back on the straight line.

- Because we know that only there will we find life.
- Jesus is of infinitely greater value than anything else.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven draws near, is the Good News.

Let us live each moment as those who know Jesus,

who know he came to deliver us from evil;

and who know Jesus is coming to reveal his glorious light.

Advent 1 B

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3 December 2017

St. Peter's

Isaiah 64:1-9; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Tear open the heavens, O Lord, and come down to make everything right.

O Come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen