

We come to the end of our Advent message series.

- Be alert – Jesus comes with power – the entire universe is undone
- Be ready – Jesus comes to clean house – he clears the filth and clutter of our lives with his saving mercy
- Be joyful – Jesus comes to save us – Jesus defeats our enemies and brings us home to God
- Be active – Jesus comes to give himself

The Baby born in Bethlehem is the King of the Jews nailed to a Roman cross whose tomb was found empty by his followers.

The Baby born in Bethlehem is the ruler foretold whose origin is ancient – even from the beginning.

The Baby born in Bethlehem is the Good Shepherd who gives abundant life to his flock.

The Baby born in Bethlehem is the Lamb of God who, having been slain for sacrifice, stands alive to exercise authority over God's people.

His name is Jesus.

Jesus is coming!

What are *you* doing?

The best question we can ask right now is “What’s a body supposed to be doing when Jesus comes?”

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Bodies are important to God.

In Genesis, we discover God populating the earth with bodies.

Bodies are offered in sacrifice to God for various reasons –

- thanksgiving,
- to atone for sin,
- and as a sign of covenant.

When the LORD asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac,

the body of the covenant promise of descendants,

Abraham obeyed

– but before Isaac was killed, the LORD provided a substitute

–the body of a ram for the sacrifice.

When the LORD was delivering his people from oppression in Egypt,

an unblemished lamb was the appointed sacrifice,

so that the blood would signal death to pass over the homes of those who obeyed.

As it became clear that no amount of animal sacrifice would solve the problem of human sin,

God's Word, the Son of the living God, received a body

– a human body – conceived and knit together in Mary's womb.

As we heard in Hebrews: *when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me"*

- Jesus' body would be the sacrifice to end all sacrifices.
- The offering to atone for all of human sin.
- Jesus comes to give himself for us.

But that is not the end of the body business.

His body was not consumed in the sacrifice on the cross.

Jesus rose bodily from the dead.

He appeared numerous times to his followers.

And then his body was received into heaven at the ascension.

**But since God promised to dwell with his people forever,
even this could not be the end of Jesus' body.**

On Pentecost, the new and living body of Jesus Christ was sanctified by the Holy Spirit –**this body called the church.**

As it is written in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 – *You all are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

As Jesus dwelt in Mary's womb and was greeted by John when Mary visited Elizabeth,

So now the church dwells

in the womb of time and space in this mortal life

to continue Jesus' mission of salvation for all peoples.

And just as Jesus was delivered of Mary and then was delivered onto the cross and into the grave to be raised to eternal life,

So the church is delivered from this mortal coil into the resplendent eternal realm of God by the coming of Jesus in glory.

...

So now back to the question:

Jesus is coming – what are *you* doing?

If we grasp the purpose for the church being the Spirit-filled body of Jesus,

Then what we are *doing* is GOING.

We are going and making followers of Jesus

of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded us.

Notice that Jesus did not say “Go and make members of denominations”

Nor did he say “Go and pay professionals to make disciples”

Nor did he say “Go and build pretty buildings”

He said, “You – go and make people who follow me.

Go and befriend unbelievers.

- Work with them
- Eat & drink with them.
- Show interest in their lives.

Tell them who I am and show them how I love.

Pray *for* them and in time pray *with* them.

Invite them to share my life.

Baptize them and live with them.

Teach them what I have taught you.

And then send them out to others.

This is how the kingdom of God is taking over this broken world.

This is what Jesus is coming to finish.

But what will he find us doing?

Showing up to church for our own sake only?

Reading the Bible only for our own edification?

Praying for our current circumstances without a care for our future or for those who remain apart from Christ?

I confess, I have done a lot of this.

It is easy to become consumed with shoring up my own spiritual reputation as though I am the only one that matters.

But the truth is, if this is all Jesus finds us doing when he comes, we are like that steward who buried his one talent.

Because truly, we have no spiritual reputation to shore up

– it is Jesus' reputation that secures our future.

And he has given us the treasures of his life to share with others, so that they, too, might come to know him and belong to him.

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Jesus is coming!

Be Alert – He comes with power to shake up the world

Be ready – He comes to clean house, drain the swamp, and make us glisten

Be Joyful – Jesus comes to save us from ourselves, from the evil in the world, and from death

And Be Active – Jesus comes to give himself and to reap the harvest of disciples we make by Going out and befriending unbelievers.

Let us, with Mary and Elizabeth,

Jesus and John in the womb,

rejoice and make a big deal of what God is doing in our world.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rax3PgPff-A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoT-sUyvw8g>