**Sunday November 27, 2022 First Sunday of Advent**

Today marks the beginning of the season of Advent, a time of preparation, a time of going toward the coming again of the Messiah, a time of great expectation and great anticipation. But exactly what is it that we anticipate? What are we getting ready for? What do we expect to happen? Do we anticipate the end of the world? Are we preparing our hearts and spirits to receive again the coming of the Christ child into the world? Or are we preparing for yet another month-long shopping spree – willfully and with malice aforethought squandering our bank accounts?

Or maybe we’re getting ready for the seven to ten pounds the average American will gain in their weight during the season?  Are we getting ready for the depression, the anxiety, and even the rage that accompanies the secular holiday season? If we allow ourselves to get caught up in the consumer Christmas – and I firmly believe that we in America celebrate two separate events on December 25 – we can easily find that instead of preparing to sing "O Holy Night" we will find ourselves living out one holy nightmare.

For the many who faithfully observe the consumer Christmas, Advent is the inevitable prelude to disappointments. For the majority of these folks, Christmas somehow hardly ever measures up to their fantasies. Even for those who manage to have some of their Christmas wishes fulfilled, the season is over so quickly that they need to make New Year’s resolutions to lose those added pounds. But the Advent we celebrate in the church – the one that has nothing at all to do with the number of shopping days left until Xmas – is altogether different. The hanging of the greens, the placement of the poinsettias, the lighting of the first Advent candle – all these invite us to dream dreams of a better world, to allow expectant visions that have nothing to do with sugar-plum fairies to dance in our heads. Advent invites us to fill the cup of today with a full measure of tomorrow.

Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals that the Advent of God is much more about surprise than predictability, more about revelation than decoration. I think it’s wonderful that we place poinsettias in the sanctuary in memory of loved ones that are no longer here with us and hang the greens and place candles in the windows and even put up a Christmas tree. But the message of Advent is not "Put up the decorations! Here I come!" but "Watch and wait! You must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at any hour when you do not expect him."

Christmas will come whether we get ready for it or not. Christ will come whether we’re ready or not. How many times have I heard folks say things like, "It can’t be Advent already – I haven’t even made out my shopping list yet?" "Christmas can’t come yet! I haven’t even brought the decorations up from the basement!" Why do we assume that Christmas can only come if we make all the proper preparations?

The truth of the matter is that God’s entrance into our lives in the person of Jesus Christ occurs at God’s initiative and not ours. Christ arrives in our midst not as a reward for our careful preparation for his coming, but as a result of the love and compassion of God. Christ comes to us to give us hope whether we’re ready or not, if you would like to know more about Advent and what follows after, please join us in our Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!