

30 November 2014 First Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 64: 1-9

Psalm 80

1 Corinthians 1: 3-9

Mark 13:24-37

[Advent 1B Nov 30, 2014](#)

The first Sunday of Advent and together we start a new liturgical year, and so a new beginning and a new opportunity for us to contemplate and realize 'A new Creation'. So, do the readings today give us any sense or understanding of the advent journey, the adventure, which we embark on today?

We might first acknowledge that what we see, or discover, in the readings will to some extent be dependent on what we're looking for; and also 'where we are at' will also determine a starting point for our way forward

So we might take some time in the days ahead to be mindful of the future that we are each unfolding; and let's appreciate that we are all, and each, unfolding a future.

We might take time to consider the expectations that we have for Christmas; what it means to you and what plans you make to encounter the 'coming of light' and the nativity of our divinity.

It is worth noting that traditions all too often have a backward orientation; we celebrate birthdays taking us back to the day of our birth; and we celebrate achievements, those things that we have done; but there is little in our communal celebrations that acknowledges all that we seek to become.

Advent is a season of becoming; it is the pregnancy of tomorrow; a time for us to prepare for all that is to be revealed; a time for us to gestate the revelation of our Divine being.

There are some affirmations in the readings today that might be helpful in our Advent preparations.

Isaiah, the prophetic voice of Advent, starts with a lament: "*We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*" As we go through Advent and continue reading from Isaiah, we will see how he moves beyond this disempowered place into a vision that speaks powerfully of 'A New Creation'.

And even at this lamentable point, Isaiah has a glimpse, a hope of for tomorrow: “*Yet, O LORD... we are all the work of your hand..... we are all your people.*”

As we start the new year, and as we prepare for our encounter with Christmas, we too might remember “*we are all the work of your hand..... we are all your people.*” And so discover that the narrative of Christmas, the nativity is all about our Divine birth.

The second reading also provides an affirmation we should take with us on our Advent journey, in verse 7 we read: “*you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Only when we forget, or deny the reality of our gifts do “*We all fade like a leaf*”; and so it is important for us, at the outset of our journey to be aware and to awaken our spiritual gifts.

Finally, the gospel reading from Mark is clearly directed toward the Australian church, and so to us: “*you know that summer is near*”; we certainly do!

But do we also, with the same certainty “*know that he is near*”?

Our journey through Advent concludes with the revelation ‘the Word become flesh and dwelt among us’; that reality, the nearness of God’ is an eternal reality.

It is a revelation that is not visible, or audible, or even sensible, but it is eternal; it is a reality that we seek to realize and celebrate at Christmas. So as we begin our Adventure toward Christmas lets head this Australian gospel; “*you know that summer is near*”; we certainly do and we will make real that other reality for we also “*know that he is near*”.

We can help each other, by sharing our journey, and also by travelling together; for this is not a process for solo-travelers; we are seeking the source of light, following the star, just as the narrative of the three magi tells it; and they travelled together.

This year we have some opportunities to share our journey; tonight we begin, we mark the start with our Advent carol service and we’ve invited some readers who represent the wider community as a sign that this is a journey for all; it is the journey of humanity.

From the readings and carols that mark the beginning of the journey, we might carry with us a symbol, or travel with one of the characters from the traditional narrative, or look within for the reality of Isaiah’s glimpse that sees ourselves as the work of Divine hands.... And then like the magi, stay focused on where the journey takes us..

On Wednesday evenings we will have an opportunity to see advent through the eyes of poetry, and then each Sunday night in Advent we will come together again for a short 'service of light', a chance to voice again our deepest desire through the Advent anthem of "O Come O come Emmanuel", and that will be followed by a time to share and reflect....

In our morning and evening prayer we might find the timeless silence in which to allow our doubts to form without fear... For our journey forward will only gain momentum if we can name the doubts that inhibit our momentum.

Without facing our doubts and our fears we are somehow held back from the risk that is tomorrows unfolding, and if don't take that risk, then tomorrow will be today continued, another repeat series, a film we've already watched, another game show with the promise of a prize at the end.

Benjamin Carson is an American author and retired neurosurgeon. He said something about the American people that spoke of their 'advent': "*Before this country came on the scene, for thousands of years people did things the same way. Within 200 years of the advent of this nation, men were walking on the moon, and I want us to recognize this is the kind of people that we are. We're creative with a lot of ingenuity and a lot of energy.*"

We're embarking not on a national Advent but rather seeking to journey into the Advent of humanity, it is a journey that is pregnant with hope;

Cardinal Ratzinger, before he was pope, said this of Advent:

"Advent is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary [to man]. Advent's intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church's year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart's memory so that it can discern the star of hope... It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope." *Seek That Which Is Above*, 1986

May we each and all have a beautiful Advent..

Peter Humphris