

**Advent 2 Year C**

**12/5/2021**

**Malachi 3:1-4; The Song of Zechariah; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6**

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A theology professor was playing golf recently with a Catholic friend, Father Joseph.

On each of the first three holes when they got to the green, Father Joseph made the sign of the cross and then sank a long and almost impossible putt... each time.

After watching this scenario three times the theology professor asked: Fr. Joe, do you think it will help my putting if I make the sign of the cross before approaching the ball?

"No," Father Joseph answered quite pointedly.

But the Doctor of Theology wasn't about to just take no for an answer, so he asked: Why not? Because I'm a Protestant?'

"No," Father Joseph replied...

"Because you don't know how to putt."

It brings up a question...

What do you put your faith in?

Do we put our faith in ourselves?

Our own abilities?

Do we put our faith in certain people?

Do we put our faith in our Christianity?

Do we put our faith in Jesus?

Although we all know the “right” answer is Jesus...

Is that where our faith is all the time?

Advent is a season where we are told to watch and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

In our Gospel reading we heard the prophet John the Baptist proclaim:

*Prepare the way of the Lord...*

And we know the Christmas story...

the first Advent of Jesus when Christ was born.

And we know that after his death and resurrection he told us he would come again before he ascended into the heavens.

Yet here we are 1,988 years later...

And are we still supposed to watch and wait?

It's been so long...

Some of us can certainly sympathize with the small son of a local pastor who was told by his mother that he should wash his hands because there were germs living in all that dirt.

He refused and complained: "Germs and Jesus! Germs and Jesus!  
That's all I ever hear around this house, and I've never seen either one.

It certainly feels that way at times.

Advent is a season in the church that more than any other season mirrors the life of a Christian in this world.

Advent is a season where we live between suffering and hope.

Liturgically, it is a time of darkness and silence with an expected hope of the incarnation of our Lord.

In our lives it is a season we watch and wait for the second coming of Jesus while we untangle the difficulties of our lives, our communities, and our world.

So, we watch and wait for the day of our Lord...

And in the midst of our waiting...

We are threatened by an invisible virus that seems to not want to go away.

We are troubled by a political landscape full of treachery and narcissism.

We hear of violent stories...

Acts of racism...

And continuing harm among the least of those in society.

But we are also faced with the difficulties in our own life...

The abuses we have lived through...

The violence we have experienced...

The loneliness...

The rejection...

The addictions...

Advent speaks to the suffering that we all have in common.

Waiting and watching for the Lord does not bring an end to the suffering on this earth...

The curse of sin continues on...

And we are reminded in the darkness and silence of Advent that we are deeply in need of a savior.

We cannot heal ourselves from the taint of sin.

We cannot heal our society from the reaches of evil.

We need a savior.

And that is the hope of Advent.

The blessed hope that a savior is coming to set the world at rights.

Episcopal Priest Fleming Rutledge writes:

*In this season [of Advent], the church celebrates two things:*

*God has already acted definitively on our behalf,*

*and God will act definitively in the future to bring his purposes to pass once and for all.*<sup>1</sup>

God has acted definitively on our behalf in the sending of his Son –  
Jesus Christ.

Who has brought redemption to the world through his death on the cross.

Who has rose victoriously from the grave to bring to his people eternal  
life.

God has destroyed death.

God has obliterated evil.

It was on the cross that Jesus said, “It is finished.”

And yet God will definitively act again in the future...

When he will come again...

To consummate the redemption of the children of God.

To bring his justice...

To set the world at rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: the Once & Future Coming of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 301

And it's here that we watch and wait...

In the midst of an imperfect world...

We wait.

But we wait with hope.

That is the message of Advent – hopeful waiting.

This is not some sort of delusional wishing...

Not a conspiracy theory...

This is confidence in the promises of God.

A God who is steadfast...

and unchanging...

A God of whom we turn to in prayer even though we are wearied by the changes and chances of this life we rest in his eternal changelessness.

You see God is for us...

He is our number one supporter...

Our biggest booster.

The late theologian, J. I. Packer said:

*The simple statement "God is for us" is in truth one of the richest and weightiest utterances that the Bible contains.*

Because God is for us... we can wait and watch even in a world that struggles and suffers.

Because God is for us... we can overcome and live through the darkness in our own lives.

Because God is for us... we can be forgiven and forgive others.

Because God is for us... we can live fully despite the pain of the past and the uncertainty of the future.

In our second reading today from St. Paul's letter to the church in Philippi we see this promise of God.

Paul is writing to encourage the brothers and sisters in the church, and he writes this:

*I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Listen to that again this time from the Message paraphrase:

*There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.*

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ...

God will finish the work that he has done in your heart and mind...

He will finish the work that he is doing in your life.

You are secure in Christ Jesus.

Advent promotes hopeful waiting in Jesus Christ.

And it rests in the promise of God.

He will complete what he has started in your life.

This my friends is good news.

God will see you to completion in him.

There are a few images in our season of Advent that are reminders of this hope.

The most well known is the Advent calendar...

Not just a countdown until Christmas...

But a countdown to the completion of our hope.

They are reminders of the goodness of God in the midst of our waiting and watching.

We also have a new image this year in our church...

It's over here on my right.

We have the stable...

Right now, it's empty.

You know when Jesus was born that night in Bethlehem...

Only a few people knew about it...

Most of the world had no idea.

But way before Jesus was born...

God was already on the move.

God was already orchestrating things according to his purpose and design.

Most of the Gospel readings we have during advent are about God's orchestrating of his will.

You see we have an empty stable here.

But a few sections back...

We have Joseph and Mary on their way to the stable.

They will get a little closer each Advent Sunday.

I am confident that they will make it to the stable on Christmas Eve.

Right now, we can say: I just see an empty stable.

We can ask: Where is the baby Jesus?

The answer is...

He's coming.

He's on his way.

The journey has already begun.

So, in our watching and waiting...

In this Advent season...

Know that God is on the move.

God is orchestrating things according to his purpose and design.

In theology we call this providence.

Just as Mary and Joseph were on the move way before the first advent of our Lord so God has things moving toward the second advent of our Lord.

And its in this promise of God that we place our confidence...

And we agree with St. Paul...

*I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

God is for us.

That is our hope in our waiting.

Amen.