

ADVENT MEDITATION FOR WEBSITE – December 2023

For one who is in Christ, the past and the future both converge upon the present by the work of the Holy Spirit. The events related to Christ in history do not just remain in history but are brought to bear upon our hearts in a real and living way. Likewise, the “future” eternal kingdom, including our real life that is hidden with Christ in God, is constantly breaking into time and space and working itself into our lives by the grace of the Spirit. Such is the Holy Spirit’s work to take what is Christ’s and bring it to bear upon our hearts in the here and now. The past and the future are both made present to us.

So, it should not be any real surprise when the season of Advent calls us back to realities that we know are past in order to bring into our lives in a fuller way the treasures of the future kingdom. What do I mean by that? In Advent, we are called back, in a sense, to the ancient cry of God’s people before His answer was manifested in Jesus Christ. “How long, O Lord?” “Come, Lord, and save us!” “How long will you wait?” Of course, in returning to that cry, we have not lost our senses. We have not forgotten that Christ has already come. But sometimes it is easy for God’s answer to become so familiar and so taken for granted that we forget the question or condition to which it was the answer. We forget how lost and without hope and desperate and engulfed in darkness we were before Christ came to us, in history and in our own personal lives.

If God does not act, we have no hope. We are utterly dependent upon His actions to make Himself known and to come to us. Lent and Advent are different in that regard. Lent is focused more on our drawing near to Him and joining him in His suffering, death, and resurrection. Advent is more about Him drawing near to us and joining in the stuff of our lives. If He doesn’t act first, If He doesn’t come to us, we have no real hope in drawing near to Him. So, at Christmas we will celebrate the Light coming into the darkness. But in the bling and glitz and bright manufactured lights and noise and busyness of the world around us that makes us tired of Christmas before we even get to it, we instead, liturgically, retreat into the darkness, so to speak, during this Advent season, and we enter back into that ancient cry - watching, waiting, longing, remembering again “deep calling to deep.” Then we will hear with fresh ears and hearts again, those wondrous words:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light (Is. 9:2),”
and, from our Vespers service, “God has heard our cry. Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people!”

For now, we watch and wait with great longing and hopeful anticipation so that we might more fully embrace Him who comes to us in great humility and be prepared to receive Him in love when He comes again in majestic glory to usher in the fullness of His Kingdom. May we be among those described by the Apostle Paul, *“who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).”*