

From Pastor Marissa Becklin

The Contradiction Of Advent

This month we have the task and honor of walking through the season of Advent together as a church. Many of you have heard me say that Advent is my favorite liturgical season—these days of deep darkness and God’s promised presence in the face of pain and exhausted anticipation are so holy.

December is a month of contradictions in our American culture—we are told to be joyful and happy, but then also given enormous amounts of pressure about perfection and crafting the perfect holiday experience for ourselves and our families. We are told to cherish the days, and then are persuaded to overschedule and rush from event to event. We are told to be grateful and embrace giving, but then become overwhelmed by the challenge of “getting the right thing”. Consumerism quickly takes the place of gracious giving, and we can get burnt out.

Enter Advent—a liturgical season that accompanies us through all of the stuff of our culture this month. As we wade through the impossible pressures and contradictions of what we believe this month is supposed to be, Advent invites us to a more holy contradiction: stillness, in the face of the chaos of the world. As the world rushes and pushes and shouts around us, as war rages and our disappointments about the year pile up, as our hearts hurt and we feel exhausted, Advent calls us to sit with those feelings and take a deep breath. To, as darkness extends more and more each day, trust that God’s promises made to us of salvation, hope, grace, and love hold fast. Poignantly, it is in the face of such chaos and darkness that God’s power is made clear to us. We can come to appreciate and give thanks for God’s mighty reign of hope and peace most when we need a measure of that hope and peace ourselves.

This month of Advent bears a holy invitation to bask in God’s presence. To find pockets of time in our days to pray “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” To tell God the truth about our hurt, and to ask for God’s peace as we trust that God heals all wounds. Ultimately, as we race toward Christmas Eve, this month invites us to remember that we don’t have to wait for Christmas to know Christ’s mercy and love. That gift is already ours, and that mercy is already experienced by us each week in Worship as we hear the words of forgiveness and receive Christ’s own self in Holy Communion. We wait for the coming again of Jesus at the last, yes, but Advent reminds us that even in the pain and hurt of this life, Christ has come near and chosen to be with us. God is already here, and will stay here through it all.

Blessed Advent, dear ones. May this season of contradictions be one of unexpected peace and hope that comes from our gracious Lord, even in the face of your hurt and pain.

Peace,

Pastor Marissa Becklin †

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