

Advent greetings my brothers and sisters in Christ! Yes, by the time you read this it will be November 29th or later. This means that we have arrived at the beginning of a new church year! As I said in worship on Sunday, the Church does not function on the secular world's calendar. The Church begins marking the new year with the first Sunday in Advent which this year is November 29th! This year we will be seeing Jesus through the eyes of the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is incredibly visual in the words selected; the writer has a classical way of word usage that transcends time. We can easily identify with what the writer of 2,000 years ago meant when he wrote:

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. – Luke 1:78-79

The images of darkness and light, night and day, despair and hope, death and life, and hell and heaven are images that often come to mind in our reflections and prayers during the time of Advent. The contrasting images are ever present and surround us in the world in which we live.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that more than ever the world needs us to lead the way to peace. Christian literally means, "Christ bearer." We carry Christ's being into a world not so different from the world that Jesus was born into. In one sense it is ironic that Jesus was born where few people would choose to live – a shelter for animals. And yet the contrast is that, even though born in this low estate, Jesus is for us, the God of life, a God who knows no boundaries, a God who came among us breaking down barriers that separated people. People separated by nationality like the Samaritans and the Jews; or separated by wealth or social status like Zacchaeus; or separated because they were unwanted like the prostitute, the lepers, beggars, and the crippled.

Isn't it wonderful that as Christ bearers we do not buy into all the hate and fear mongering about the United States accepting refugees that is so rampant in our news since the terrorist attacks in Paris. Jesus was bold and decisive. Jesus filled people's lives with richness, peace, goodness, health, reconciliation, and healing. Jesus led them from darkness into light, from despair into hope, from death into new life.

So what about you? Will this Advent be just another excuse to "shop 'til you drop?" Or will we be bold and decisive? Will our witness to the world be one that helps people move from their darkness into Christ's new light, lift them from despair and fill them with hope? We can do this if we truly live the gift of the Incarnate Christ, the gift of his life, the gift of his love, the gift of his peace.

Merry Christmas to All!

Pastor Peggy