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Advent 1

Happy advent everyone. Again we start a new year in the church which begins on the first Sunday of Advent and as we, as in years and generations past, wait to honor the coming of God at Christmas in the most wondrous and small infant Christ. The cold of winter creeps in as we watch for snow and shut our doors into the warmth of our homes and work places and of course, church. And I envision that sort of warmth wrapped around Christ is wrapped around ourselves as we join in festivity and good company for this season of Lessons and Carols and craft nights and visitations from Old St. Nick.

And yet... despite this being our first Sunday of Advent, we don't hear a story from Matthew or Luke about Jesus birth. Not yet. We start instead with Jesus already an adult, telling us of the coming of the Son of Man in glory and the reminder to keep awake because we know neither the day nor the hour. We've been, since Pentecost back at the end of May, hearing parables and stories of miracles from Jesus, we've been in the thick of his ministerial works and teaching.

So why do we start Sunday off not with the excited anticipation of new born Christ? Why do we start off with the adult Jesus, with a final metaphor of fig trees and servants awaiting the return of masters?

We do it... because this is the last word Jesus speaks before the climax of our faith. Before the passion and before death and before the wonder of the resurrection. The very next lines of Mark, the earliest Gospel historically written, reads, "It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him."

We read Jesus' final words of his ministry before the Gospels' final chapters because they frame for us what we are awaiting. And reminds us as we begin this journey once again to the empty tomb on Easter that while the journey won't always be easy, the wonder of God is abundant.

I love the story of Christianity because it is the story of miracles and transformation, the story of love spiting the deepest darkness, it is epic in scale as John will say on Christmas day that "in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God" the cosmos is forever changed as witnessed in the gospel and Jesus words today of a darkened sun and falling stars at the coming of Christ on clouds in glory. And yet what we await this season... is a young mother and her newborn infant. Small people. One small family celebrating the birth of child, an occurrence as mundane and common as our own births. And yet it is here, just as has been the case for each of us, it is here where God wants to be, surrounded by the love of strange wise people and shepherds and barnyard creatures.

And if there's something I hope to remember from this combination of the Jesus of great glory and the Jesus laying swaddled in a trough, it's that the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus represents and which Mary his mother proclaims in the magnificat, it's that the story of life, death, resurrection, and love is a story that can meet us from the realm of legend and the imagery of a transformed planet earth and reality all the way to the transformation that comes with becoming a new parent. Or starting a new job. Or waking up one day, after the slow burn of learning an instrument or a skill to find that you play guitar way better than when you first started or you know how to love your partner or friend better than the first day you met them. That years after losing someone you love you come to a new way of being and a new way of remembering them.

The way that we wait for things to change, for a savior to come, for our lives to be transformed, its right here. It's in this time we wait for the birth of Christ. And while December 25th comes but once a year, I do think that our moments of waiting are punctuated by the Christmas moments that arrive each day.

That joyful birth of pancakes and sausage on these St. C.'s café Sundays or in the creations to come on Advent craft night.

This season, let's wait together, let's think about the hope we have and the Christmas day to come. And let's, as we wait, live into the Christmases each day: the ways we're transformed and get to celebrate that transformation with people we might never have expected being in our lives.