

A Note from Pastor's Desk

What Advent and Christmas are NOT...

Advent is not about blue paraments. Advent is not about wreaths with blue, pink and white candles. Advent is not about a Christmas tree or Chrismons that eventually adorn it. Advent is not buying gifts for friends and family nor is it about the commercialization that surrounds Christmas. Advent is not singing, caroling, or special music. Advent is not somber, and nor is it celebratory. Advent is not optional.

Christmas is not a holiday. Christmas is not about a family dinner. Christmas is not a day off to relax. Christmas is not all about commercialism and preparing for Black Friday.

What then are Advent and Christmas about?

Advent is clearing our thoughts and minds of the worldly things that distract us from God. It is time to prepare for the return of our Lord. Advent is time to slow down and thoughtfully embrace what it means that God became human flesh, lived among us. Who suffered died, rose again and ascended to heaven for us. Advent is for marveling at the length God is willing to go through so that we may be one with God and one another. Advent is for reconciling ourselves to God who knows our hearts and desires. Advent is a time of surprise as God chose a young virgin Mary to be united to and conceive. Advent is a time of wonder as Mary's fiancé Joseph goes against tradition regarding Mary's pregnancy. Advent is when angels surround God's children as God's will unfolds. Advent is also about another older women, thought barren, who conceives for the first time, Elizabeth and her husband Zacheriah who is struck dumb until the baby is born. Advent is a love story about God's love for his creation and we are a part of his story that continues until the last day. Advent is about waiting as patiently as we are able.

Christmas literally is a mass (like the Catholics a Holy Communion which celebrates Christ's life and death). Christmas is an opportunity to look on with awe at the wonderous thing God has done, is doing and will do for his creatures. Christmas is a time to spend time with the ones we love and the ones who love us. Christmas is to remind us we worship a true God, a living God who interacts with us as we open ourselves to God's possibilities. Christmas is the time we revisit the magnitude of Jesus' Christ's birth and how the world first received him. It is a time to imagine how glorious resurrection will be when Jesus returns for us who wait.

Certainly, we live in a different world from what Mary and Joseph did so long ago which is exactly why God implemented this way of knowing God. It was given to us as a gift. We don't pay a single penny for it. And yes, we do live in an extremely busy and often uncertain world where bad things happen. This is why God comes to us. Not as an apparition, but as an infant in a manger who will experience life as we do, fully human and divine. God gives us an opportunity to live life with him in a way that is intended to help us thrive. Christmas is that day when all of the church on earth rejoices together and renews its faith in God.

From Advent to Christmas the path to eternal life is laid out for us. Follow Jesus. Leave the things the world tells us are important and focus on the one true God who is already at work bringing everything to order. It is painful sometimes because we are called to let go of things we feel are mostly important but truly are distracting us, keep our eyes blind, our heart colds and our spirits longing for peace.

God's invitation invites you to come into worship to rest, be renewed in hope, peace, and joy and love. Try to find time during Advent and Christmas to pause basking in the love of God.

My prayer is we all can look past the worldly things that separate us from the love of God. To embrace God.

Peace. God is with us. Pastor Christi