

“Waiting In Expectation: Something More Is Coming!”

Second Sunday of Advent
Rev. Kit B. Billings, M.Div, MA
Dec. 5, 2021

Scripture Readings

1 Samuel 12:20-25

Luke 1: 67-79

Hymns/Xmas Carols

1) "O Christmas Tree" (lyrics are attached)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmQPYNxDYI>

2) "It Came Upon The Midnight Clear" 507

3) "The First Noel" 514

1 Samuel 12:20-25

And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ²¹ And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. ²² For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. ²³ Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. ²⁴ Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. ²⁵ But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

Luke 1: 67-79

Zechariah's Song

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors

and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation

through the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
 by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
 and in the shadow of death,
 to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Insight for Worship

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched -- they must be felt with the heart."

"Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand – my hand that clutched at emptiness -- and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."

From *Light in My Darkness*

by Helen Keller, a devoted New Church worker in life

SERMON: "Waiting In Expectation: Something More Is Coming!"

The Season of Advent means several very important things for our lives, and, from an historical standpoint it refers to the **most important Divine intervention event on God's part** since human beings first set foot on Earth's soil. In short, though, Advent means there is something wondrous coming into our lives that will turn our lives upside-down compared to our usual way of living. Here's how author Jan L. Richardson puts this phenomenon as it relates to Advent: "The Season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before. It is not possible to keep it from coming, because it will. That's just how Advent works. What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's hindquarters fade in the distance. So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. There will be time enough for running, for rushing, for worrying, and for pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon." (*Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*, 2010 2nd printing, p. Xiii)

During my daughter's and my visit with family in Detroit over our Thanksgiving holiday, my sister Rev. Renee' Machiniak, shared a poignant real life experience with me that I won't soon forget. Several years ago, while she was working as a hospital chaplain at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan something happened to her during a patient review meeting within their hospice program, and it illustrates what I am talking about with you this morning.

Renee' shared: "During a patient review meeting in hospice, one of the nurses said to me across the table, 'Hey, Renee, I yelled hello to you at Shelby Nursing Home and you just kept walking away.' She said that I looked busy and must have needed to keep going. But I reassured her that I would never be too busy to say hello.'" Renee' went on to explain to her co-worker that she has had one deaf ear since long ago when she was a toddler, and that she often misses the hallway hellos that most of us hear typically in the business of life. Renee' then shared with her friend the nurse that back in our High School years, the other girls in school thought she was stuck-up because they would say hello to her in the hallways between classes and due to not hearing them, Renee' would keep on walking.

Because of this common occurrence, Renee' wasn't popular. But the truth was that she simply did not hear them. The other girls' hellos went right on by her. Usually when my sister shares with people that she has one deaf ear, they feel sorry for her. But, the fascinating thing is, Renee' never does feel that way. She has never felt sorry for herself. And the reason is because she has never known what life is like being able to hear out of both of her ears at the same time! She has no memorable experience of having two hearing ears. She said to me, "I have no clue about what I've been missing—of knowing what most people take for granted. All I know is," Renee' continued, "that there is **something more**. **There is, something more, Kit, as odd as that sounds.**"

[...pause...]

Our meaningful and meandering dialogue continued, as we warmed up some Thanksgiving leftovers, consisting of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, and green bean casserole, which was even better the next day as "leftovers." We began talking about a common discussion topic within both of our journeys as hospice chaplains, about how this vision of "Advent blessings" can show itself within those who are awash in grief and loss. What we felt was, that when we are grieving the loss of someone we love, there is a time when **all we know, and all we want to know, is MISSING THEM**. All we can focus on is thinking about what life was like when we were being with our loved one, who is now deceased. We feel glued into thinking about being with them, longing for those days to return....which would take away that awful emptiness of being without them now. When grieving is in this first, lengthy acute phase it is easy to long for our loved one because doing so feels like we are able to be closer to them because we are clinging to all of the memories of yesterday – AND –

anything else we could be doing means living on WITHOUT THEM...and this doesn't feel right.

We know in our head that there is something more—our faith tells us that this natural or corporeal world is only the beginning, but our hearts while in grief hold onto the one we love and whom we think we can keep closer to us by holding onto them, as if they had never died. It is a 100% loving and dogged attempt to hold onto “what used to be.” And when we loving human beings find ourselves in this very dark and bewildering state of being in life, we are inhabiting the land of what I like to call: “**The land of the INCONSOLABLE.**”

Renee' and I agree that there is much spiritual value in allowing ourselves to feel the darkness of our grief and our grieving, as we allow ourselves to lovingly miss them...because we love them so very much that for a while it feels impossible to go forward in life without them being in our midst. Our hearts hold onto the ones we love, which echoes the reverberating truth deep within us that only by having and feeling our grief can we truly **HONOR THEM AND ALL THAT THEY MEAN TO US!** We simply **WANT THEM BACK**, and nothing nor no one can tell us anything differently....that is, in this first, acute phase of grieving.

This incredibly deep and mysterious “Land of the Lost,” when we're in the thick of loss and grief, contains an immense amount of spiritual value in it, for you see, during our many moments of weeping and missing and holding onto our dearly departed loved one, we can begin to feel the gentle footprints and the soft passings-by of the most powerfully important “loved One” we will ever know throughout our eternal lives-----GOD! Truly, my friends, the Lord our God often moves **STEALTHFULLY AND VERY, VERY DEEPLY WITHIN US**, as we struggle to find our way forward in what feels like a very dark and lonely place in life, of living now without our precious loved one. This inconsolable place in us may **feel like** a Godless desert-place experientially, for it is a dark void that feels like it is going to last forever....until we get what we really want, which is our loved one back. Yes, back into our arms again, when we can hug them yet again, with all of our might!

So, you see, until this time of “re-hugging” them happens, we just cannot seem to bounce back. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. **Because, the truth is that GOD is in very, very deep communication with us**, underneath and beyond what we see, and what we hear! Beyond what we grasp with our five natural senses, God is whispering immensely powerful “Divine sweet-nothings,” you might say, which are

truths that until our grief journey had begun, we just wouldn't have been able to hear and grasp and understand them. There is a deep movement of life.....just beyond what we know now gently soothing and comforting us, while the Light (which is not of this natural world) **relentlessly shines within to sustain us and cushion the falls that come, as we reach for a way in the darkness, and as we reach for OUR WAY, through this time that challenges everything we thought we knew, and everything we thought we believed in.**

Miraculously, even the very darkest places in us—within this complex physical universe we usually call “our home”—is not at all dark to God. In *Psalm 139:11-12* we read, “**...even the darkness will not be darkness to you, O Lord; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as Light to you.**”

The living REALITY of life is that ***THERE IS SOMETHING MORE: a Light so very real---yes, a Holy Divine Presence---which carries us and LOVES US!*** This is why billions of people around the world connect so greatly with that amazing poem, “Footprints In the Sand.” After the first stanza it reads:

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

~Margaret Fishback Powers

And so, as we move through the darkest of darkness in life, such as our journeys through loss and grief, this Divine Presence of pure Love Itself holds us and gives this deep, spiritual Light for us when we cannot get through our days alone. But, **what helps us to turn the corner in the way we feel about our dark time is to ASK THE LORD for**

[help](#): in *Psalm 94* we read: “Unless the Lord had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. And when I said, ‘My foot is slipping,’ your Love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your **CONSOLATION** brought joy to my soul.” (*Psalm 94:17-19*)

Yes, during my own journeys through grief, the moment when my heart sensed there was....**SOMETHING MORE**...and there was a flickering Light of the new life and hope within my hurting heart, I knew I had given myself enough time, and I knew that I needed to give myself more time, to feel all of the human feelings that express the truth about the Love of God that means so very much. Indeed, it is within those life-altering moments with the Lord, when Divine Love reaches out and brings us a glimpse...of something more, something powerfully consoling, something that is truly...**saving**. And we receive it, as when a starving person is given something to eat.

That “something more” is then able to touch our grief and our broken heart, consoling us as when a frightened infant is held skin-to-skin to her mother’s breast. We can begin to see that in reality, there is no separation between those who love each other—and it is only a matter of time before again one day, we will be able to hold and linger again with the one we miss so deeply, the one who was born out of the same Love that made us. Helen Keller speaks to the centrality of this non-Earthly realm of spirit, which ultimately bonds us all together through Love, when she wrote:

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.”

“Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand – my hand that clutched at emptiness - and my heart leaped to the rapture of living.”

This knowing that came to Helen Keller took time for her to realize and understand, just as our knowing in grief of an Advent Divine-Love, which softens the sadness and losses in life, must come in our own time, in our own way.

Until that time comes, we wait in Advent...longing...and faith for the Lord comes to us when the Lord knows the time for a new spiritual birth is ready. This is a holy longing, a waiting that has **HOPE** in the center of our being. This is a holy birthing, which can also bring to us the fraternal twin to HOPE, which is....**PEACE**. The second Sunday in Advent centers around peace, the peace that comes knowing that we can trust in God’s

Divine timing, that out of darkness and fear can come transformational hope, love and peace, for we know that the Lord will continue to be born in us anew.

As the Apostle John wrote so beautifully: "For the true Light, that gives Light to every person, is coming into the world." (*John 1:9*) Amen.