

Advent: Expectations to Expectancy

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

December 1, 2019

by Rev. Dave Le Grand

Happy New Year my friends! Our culture has already proclaimed Christmas here, and tries to tell us what we yearn for under the tree. Yet what a gift we inherit in Christian tradition, Advent. Advent creates space and opportunity to shed expectations.

When the Gospel of Matthew was written – 50 years after Jesus had died and was gone – and the faithful had expected him to return in glory; he hadn't returned. What they *did* witness was their world – their politics, their lives – worsening, and still no sign of Jesus. Matthew's Jesus speaks a holy truth that is timeless because prophets centuries before him had spoken it and even today I hear notes of it in prophets of modern time.

What was, and is today, that important holy prophetic message?
Don't give up, because God never gives up. Be vigilant! Stay awake!

Don't do this out of fear or guilt, say the prophets, but live expectantly, and model faithful living *because you are excited that the day is soon upon you*. My friends, this is a truly challenging message to take to heart. Everything around us tells us that Christmas joy is ours already, right here and now. Walk through the mall: *Buy this product. Follow the message of a particular inspirational guru.*

This is not at all a new tension, though. In fact, it is a very ancient conflict between God's call to *prepare your hearts*, and the prevailing message of any time that tempts us to enjoy immediate gratification.

I attended the Friday climate strike just across the street here. The message is not easy, and it fits within Advent expectancy. You see, the prevailing narratives I hear most often today from political leaders tend to ultimately pit our economy against caring for Creation. Sophia Mathur, Autumn Pelletier and other young prophets base their message on sound, reasoned findings of climate scientists around the world. We won't have a healthy economy if we don't have a healthy ecosystem to live in. The call of modern prophets: Our change of our lifestyles so we care for Creation cannot wait until 2050, or 2030, or even until next year! We need to learn new habits now. That is a challenging message, but Good News to those of us who care about God's love God's Creation.

Remember the prayer we learned from Jesus? "Thy kin-dom come on earth as it is in heaven." God's kin-dom vision is not just for after we are dead, it is a vision and love God has for our earth now as in heaven.

And all this Advent work we are invited to do, we do it not because we feel obligated, or are afraid of some punishment. No way! We live radically and expectantly because we are excited that God is close, God's vision is coming soon, and we are getting ready. That is radical Biblical waiting! Amen.