

Advent: A Time of Hopeful Longing

Poor Advent. This liturgical season is jam-packed with so much incredible imagery: God's partnership with a poor Palestinian woman from Nazareth to bring salvation and redemption to the whole world, light that shines in the midst of darkness (and the darkness never overcomes it), hope in the face of a weary, tired, and oh so broken world, and excitement and anticipation for that awesome, incredible day when Christ returns and redeems all of creation. And yet, we so often look at Advent as a time to count down to Christmas, to go on frantic shopping trips, and to watch cheesy movies. Advent really gets shortchanged in the scope of the church year.

I love Advent—it's my favorite liturgical season, because it's the one that best fits my angsty, hopeful, slightly impatient attitude when it comes to the brokenness of the world. And let's be honest—we're all a little exhausted at the end of this year. Maybe we're tired of death, or pain, or starvation, or homelessness, or violence, or abuse, or racism, or sexism, or cancer, or fighting with our spouse, or being alone, or seeking mental health, or seeking sobriety. Whatever it is for you, this year—we're all tired.

We're all tired, and Advent is a season for tired people. Advent is a season for the weary world who in the midst of so much brokenness and pain pines for something better, for something real, for love and justice and peace that is tangible—that we can *feel*. In Advent we sit in the dark, holding vigil for the one who was, and is, and is to come. We remember that Jesus showed up in this world not as a powerful emperor, but as a tiny, fragile, vulnerable baby in a dirty stall in the backstreets of Bethlehem.

We remember that Jesus will show up again, will crush the perverse power of empire and oppressor, will set the captives free, and will redeem all the earth. In the meantime, as we light candles and sing, we remember that God has promised to walk with us in this darkness—that we are not alone.

Advent is a time of honesty about the world, of deep and real hope in the face of darkness, and of sitting vigil for the new and glorious morn that we know is dawning. It is a time of pregnancy—we are all pregnant with hope, knowing that God is about to bear love and grace and new life in our midst.

May you, o weary one, cling tightly to God's promises and find hope in the midst of this dark Advent season.

O come, o come, Emmanuel.

Peace, Pastor Marissa Becklin