

MOVING SPIRIT

November, 2004

Eskaton Village Community Church

Pastor's Parcel

There's nothing more affirming to humanity and the dignity of the human body than the truths taught by the Advent season. Advent ("coming") both *closes* and *opens* the cycle of the Church year. How does it affirm our us?

First, Advent's latter part emphasizes Christ's Incarnation, His 1st Coming. Not only does the Bible teach that we are made in God's image, but that God took on that image by becoming a human, the Lord Jesus Christ. That truth, and all other implications of this event, tell us more about the meaning and worth of our humanness than any hopeful or wishful thinking offered by philosophy and psychology. God valued us so much that, to save us, He became one of us. Christmas celebrates this 1st Advent of God into the world.

The start of Advent emphasizes the return of Christ, His 2nd Coming. He will come back in the same human body He was raised in and left with. At that time a physical resurrection of humanity will take place. Human spirits will be in bodies again, forever. Where those bodies will reside after His 2nd Advent depends on how each individual person responds



to His 1st Advent.

Open your heart this season to the Babe of Bethlehem! He became one of us that humans become one with Him.

--Pastor David Hatton

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Personal Pulpit

WOULDN'T IT BE WONDERFUL?

The Jesus I know leaks into the difficult places and joyfully overflows Into problem places and people. He erupts into the

geography of need. Steals into the bruised crevices of hurt-the black and blue areas of pain. He is not safe. And when He fully invades a person by invitation, literally anything can happen. He doesn't come in to rearrange the furniture lie Is into reconstruction. He doesn't repair He recreates. He Is not so interested in making us "religious" as in making us whole "in a way that we would never even dare ask or imagine." He was considered dangerous to public safety when He walked upon this earth. Today this same Jesus is seeking men and women who will allow Him to be Himself-in all His fullness and unpredictability.

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Pithy Pieces

Oh! You are so great and I am so small,
I tremble think of you, world, at all;
And yet, when I said my prayers today,
A whisper inside me seemed to say,
"You are more than the Earth,
Though you're such a dot,
You can love and think
And the Earth cannot!"

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Prayer's Priority

I Said a Prayer for You Today
I said a prayer for you today
And know God must have heard.
I felt the answer in my heart,
Although He spoke no word.
I didn't ask for wealth or fame,
I knew you wouldn't mind.
I asked Him to send treasures

Of a far more lasting kind.
I asked that He be near you
At the start of each new day
To grant you health and blessings
And friends to share your way.
I asked for happiness for you
In all things great or small,
But it was for His loving care
I prayed for most of all.

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Poetry's Place

A Little Something to Meditate On

If I knew it would be the last time that
I'd see you fall asleep
I would tuck you in more tightly and
pray the Lord, your soul to keep.
If I knew it would be the last time that I
see you walk out the door,
I would give you a hug and kiss and call
you back for one more.
If I knew it would be the last time, I
would spare an extra minute or two
to stop and say "I love you," instead of
assuming, you would KNOW I do.
If I knew it would be the last time I
would be there to share your day,
well I'm sure you'll have so many more,
so I can just let this one slip away.
For surely there's always tomorrow to
make up for an oversight
and we always get a second chance to
make everything right.
There will always be another day to say
our "I love you's,"
And certainly there's another chance to
say our "Anything I can do's?"
But just in case I might be wrong, and
today is all I get,

I'd like to say how much I love you and
I hope we never forget.

Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
young or old alike,
And today may be the last chance you
get to hold your loved one tight.
So if you're waiting for tomorrow, why
not do it today?

For if tomorrow never comes, you'll
surely regret the day,
That you didn't take that extra time for a
smile, a hug, or a kiss
and you were too busy to grant someone
their one last wish.
So hold your loved ones close today,
whisper in their ear.
Tell them how much you love them and
that you'll always hold them dear.

Take time to say
"I'm sorry," "please forgive me," "thank
you" or "it's okay."
And if tomorrow never comes, you'll
have no regrets about today.

--Author Unknown

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Walking in the garden
On a crisp, clear day,
I marveled at the beauty
All along the way.
In the chilly breeze
The little flowers shivered;
Hyacinths stood straight and tall,
While jonquils bowed and quivered.
The miracle of springtime-
My faith renewed again.
There is a resurrection
From death to life again.

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Pearls of Prudence

Live each day to the fullest. Get the
most from each hour, each day, and each
age of your life. Then you can look
forward with confidence, and back
without regrets...

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If my compassion is true, if it be a deep
compassion of the heart and not a legal
affair, or a mercy learned from a book
and practiced on others like a pious
exercise, then my compassion for others
is God's mercy for me. My patience
with them is God's patience with me.
My love for them is God's love for me.

--Thomas Merton

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Whenever the heart becomes separated
from the intellect, there is trouble.
Either reason reigns alone and you get
theory at the expense of practice, or else
emotion is taken to be the sole criterion,
and you let loose the storms of passion.

--Dom Hubert van Zeller

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In this little hazelnut I saw three
properties. The first is that God made it,
the second is that God loves it, the third
is that God preserves it. But what is that
to me? It is that God is the Creator and
the Lover and the Preserver.

--Julian of Norwich

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Pleasurable Pastime

Christmas is a time when everyone
wants his past forgotten and the
present remembered.

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Christmas holidays--anticipation,
preparation, recreation, prostration,
and recuperation.

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The Christmas bells some like best are
on the cash registers.

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Precious Principles

Say well and do well
End with one letter.
Say well is good,
Do well is better.

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Little strokes
Fell great oaks.

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Of all the sayings in the world
The one to see you through
Is never trouble trouble
Till trouble troubles you.

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It is not how long we live
but how well--
It is not how rich we are
but how valuable--
It is not how intelligent we are
but how wise--
It is not what happens to us in life
but what we do about it that counts.

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Past Pathways

The Cradle, a Christmas Story
by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson
They left their home, the new cradle
still swinging from the rafters. Night
after night the aroma of fresh-cut wood

had filled the room as Joseph had
patiently fashioned the tiny cradle,
using the same chisel and saw he
usually put down at dusk.

Now Joseph wiped the tears from
Mary's cheeks and shut the door
behind them. "It'll be okay," he told
her, as he cinched up their belongings
on the donkey.

"Joseph, can't we wait a few days?
The baby could come any time." She
didn't want to leave home. Not now.
"We've waited for the baby as long
as we dare." He was ready to get on the
road. "We have to leave today or I'll be
arrested for not appearing in
Bethlehem for the census."

"At least bring the cradle, Joseph,"
she pleaded. "I want the baby to have
something nice."

"No, it'll have to stay behind. The
baby will be rocking in it soon
enough."

Joseph tugged hard at the donkey's
halter. No luck. "Come on, animal," he
shouted, whacking it on the rear end to
get it moving. Grudgingly the donkey
responded. With one hand Joseph led
the donkey, with the other he steadied
Mary on the steep incline, slowly
enough to accommodate her ungainly
progress down the winding road which
led from Nazareth's height. In the
house above, the cradle hung still.
Five days and ninety bone-weary
miles later, Joseph searched the small
stable where they were staying on the
outskirts of crowded Bethlehem.

Mary's time would be soon now. He

was careful to keep his lamp from igniting the old straw. He finally settled on an ancient stone manger for the baby's bed, cut from the wall of the limestone cave which housed the animals. He reached in to scoop the last gritty bits of straw from the manger's dank bottom. "That'll have to do," he muttered. He filled the trough with an armful of fresh fodder, which he covered with a folded blanket to keep the animals away.

It was well past midnight by the time Mary finished washing and wrapping her new baby. Now she lifted him gently into his new bed. Joseph put his arm around her shoulders as they gazed at the sleeping infant. Mary touched the tiny fingers.

"That cradle you spent so much time on would be real nice right now, Joseph." She looked up at the cave's low ceiling. "You could hang it somewhere. No baby I know has a cradle like that. It's fit for a king." Joseph grinned. "Not every boy has a carpenter for a dad," he said. But he wondered. Why couldn't little Jesus be home in that cradle? Why does this special child the angel told Mary and him about have to be born in this smelly stable? A hill-country carpenter's home is bad enough. Why here? Why Bethlehem?

The answer wasn't long in coming. An older boy poked his head in the door, startling the couple from their quiet moment. "Is there a baby in here?" he mumbled apologetically.

Then he saw the tiny child. Mary picked her baby up to shield the infant from his eyes. The face disappeared. Mary's eyes mirrored Joseph's concern. He strode to the cave's opening. He could hear a distant call, "Over here, Jake found him!" In the darkness, Joseph could make out a handful of forms coming toward him. He gripped his stout wooden staff and stood resolutely at the door.

As they approached the stable he could see they were shepherds. Joseph's grip on the staff tightened. The oldest one spoke hesitantly. "Can we come in? We have ... ah ... come to see the Christ-child."

Joseph glanced at Mary. He could feel a tingle move down his spine. This was more than an accident. The whole fantastic course of events was far more than an accident. He nodded and stepped back into the stable. "Yes, come in. You are welcome."

The shepherds shuffled into the cramped cave. The youngest pushed in alongside the donkey to get a better view. They knelt. "God be praised!" The old shepherd spoke with deepest reverence.

"It's just like the angel told us," another whispered in awe. "'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,' the angel said."

"Imagine! An angel . . . talking to us!" the old man interjected with rising excitement. "None of the uppity-ups in this town would lower themselves to

talk to us shepherds," he added. "But an angel did . . . And the child is right here in a stable so we can come and see him." Rivulets of tears were inching down the shepherd's weathered face.

Joseph stared at the old man. "How did you find us?" he finally asked. The boy who had first peeked in answered. "The angel said, 'Unto you is born ...'"

"Yes, to us!" The beaming old man couldn't contain himself.

The boy spoke deliberately, as if to remember the exact words: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior...."

"That's here--Bethlehem--David's birthplace," the littlest boy interrupted. He thrust out his chest proudly. "King David was a shepherd, too, you know."

The older boy continued. " . . . a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

"The Christ, the Messiah . . . He's the one!" The old man pointed to the baby.

"The angel was very specific," the young man went on. "'And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.'" He grinned. "How could we miss? We just ran into town and checked every stable until we found you . . . found him." The boy paused. "How many newborns in Bethlehem do you know with a cattle manger for a cradle?"

Joseph chuckled. So that was it. The heavenly Father Himself had provided

a bed for His child. A special cradle. A sign to these crude shepherds that God cared for them too.

Joseph squeezed Mary's hand very tightly.

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"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

---Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)