



Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Advent
December 2, 2018

Change for God's Creation

By Mary Katharine Deeley

We begin this Church year as we left the last one—with a description of the signs that will come before Christ appears. But where Mark warns of the coming judgment for the enemies of God, Luke, with great subtlety, shifts the focus so people will hear the hope of salvation. “Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand,” he calls out (Luke 21:28). At the end of the Church year, we meditate on Christ's coming in glory to judge the living and the dead. In the beginning, we remember the Incarnation: God's emptying himself to

become fully human and come into the world. Both actions are heralded by, and will mean great change for, us and for God's creation.

Change happens when God breaks into the world, regardless of the time. In account after account in the Bible, we watch as God visits people and changes their names (Abraham and Peter), their lives (Jeremiah, the apostles, the woman at the well), and heals their separation and brokenness (the blind man, the paralytic, and Lazarus). Also, sinners are punished (the rich man and Jezebel) and landscapes are altered (Isaiah's vision of valleys lifted up and mountains laid low). This saving action continues throughout history, especially within the Church and among the saints.

Advent is a time to remember that Christ came to change the world and each of us. Have we allowed ourselves to be changed? Are we willing to be shaped by the hand of God, called by a different name, and given a place in Christ's mission? Let's hope so because, ready or not, here he comes. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

Christmas is near, the signs of his approach are evident along our streets and in our houses....These outward signs invite us to welcome the Lord who always comes and knocks at our door, knocks at our heart, in order to draw near to us.

—Angelus, December 11, 2016



Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 33:14–16

I will make a just shoot spring up for David; he shall do what is right and just in the land.

1 Thessalonians 3:12—4:2

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.

Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

[Jesus said,] “They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I open to accepting the changes that God wants to bring to my life?
- How has the coming of Christ changed the world?

Connecting the Dots

By Richard Rohr, OFM

In this space we often discuss the great themes of Scripture. Though the point may seem obvious, this is a good time to emphasize that the Bible is more than a series of unrelated inspired stories or a collection of helpful lessons to live by. Biblical revelation invites us into an utterly new experience, and the wonderful thing is that human consciousness is ready for it—perhaps more than ever.

Remember the connect-the-dots activities found in the coloring books of our youth? When we had finished drawing in the lines and making all the connections, we suddenly saw something we hadn't seen before. So it is with the Bible: Its themes have coherence about them, offering something good and new. That is what the word of God is meant to be.

In many ways this gift is more important than ever. We live at a time when voices are telling us that nothing has meaning, there are no big patterns. We cannot thrive in such a universe. As we know, the soul needs meaning like the body needs food. The soul must have meaning to flourish and live with safety. What true biblical revelation gives us is coherence in the face of seeming incoherence.



As children, most of us learned the story about Adam and Eve. The Garden is the symbol of unitive consciousness where we cannot separate from God. Whatever our journeys outward from there, they eventually lead us back to the center to find who we really are, to find ourselves in God.

God at the Center

We come to see this as the end point of the Bible, where at last in this marvelous doctrine that we call the Trinity we have this mystery of mutual indwelling: God in us and we in God; God in human history and history finding itself in God. There is no separation anymore.

Saint Paul addresses this idea of mutual indwelling in Colossians 3:4: “When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.” In his Letter to the Galatians (2:19–20), Paul writes: “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God.”

What God is doing throughout the Bible is creating people who are capable of encounter, of being present. The whole movement of the Bible leads us toward ever greater incarnation, ever deeper indwelling. The last book of the Bible ends in the holy city with the river of

life flowing through it (Revelation 21). Here we have a final image of mutual indwelling: We live in God and God lives in us. And we dare to believe that it could be true.

The Ultimate Question

Recall an early scene from John's Gospel (1:38–39) that sums up much of the good news. Jesus encounters two of his disciples walking along the lake and asks them what they want. I believe that is what God is asking us: What do we really want? They replied with another question, asking Jesus where he lived.

This is the ultimate spiritual question: Where do you live? Who are you? The answer, of course, is that we are sons and daughters of God. Jesus invited his disciples to follow him, and they stayed with him for the rest of that day. This is Jesus' invitation and his gift. This is what the Bible is finally calling us to. +

PRAYER

Lord, help me to slow down and become more aware of my rushing aimlessly from place to place. Quiet my mind and steady my heart that I may live in your presence throughout the day.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 3–8

Monday, St. Francis Xavier:
Is 2:1–5 / Mt 8:5–11

Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 11:1–10 / Lk 10:21–24

Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 25:6–10a / Mt 15:29–37

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
Is 26:1–6 / Mt 7:21, 24–27

Friday, St. Ambrose: Is 29:17–24 / Mt 9:27–31

Saturday, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Gn 3:9–15, 20 / Eph 1:3–6, 11–12 / Lk 1:26–38