

Advent: A Time To Remember

Advent is nearing and Christmas is just around the corner. As I walked through the church building this morning, there was delightful laughter and creative chatter filling every space. Lights, decorations, and greenery were going up, as glitter found places to eternally abide. Yet, for many, this season is filled with busyness, even stress. Still, **Advent invites us to slow down.** The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” ... a translation of the Greek word *parousia*, which means “presence” or “arrival.” It is a time of preparation in anticipation of the arrival of Christ. It is a time to remember His story and rest in His presence.

As we come to the end of the year, the end of our “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” series, the end of the book of Malachi, and the end of the Old Testament, it feels as though we are standing at a place of tremendous importance. The closing verses of Malachi are burdened with the weight of the past and restless with the anticipation of the future. They form a connection between the Old and New Testament - a bridge between what God has said and done in the past and what He will say and do in the future. Here is what the prophet records in the final three verses of his message to God’s people:

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. **Behold**, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.
(Malachi 4:4-6)

Malachi connects remembering God’s Word to the Messiah’s coming. Since the moment sin and the curse entered Creation, the promise of a Victor, Redeemer, and King ached in the hearts of men and caused Creation to groan with anticipation of its coming redemption (Rom 8:22-23). As the Old Testament unfolded over the centuries, the hope in the promised anointed King who would arrive and put this world - broken by sin - back together again seemed to turn into doubt. So, in God’s final oracle of the Old Testament, He reminds and reassures His people of His certain promises recorded in His Word: “The Messiah will come, and when He comes, hearts will be changed and evil will be destroyed!” What an incredible way to bridge the Old and New Testament!

So, here we are today. We find ourselves in the era between Savior Jesus' first coming and King Jesus' second coming. We need to remember the words of the angel as he spoke to Mary in Luke 1:31-32:

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and **you are to call him Jesus** [which means "God saves"]. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David**, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; **his kingdom will never end.**

This message is the Good News - the Gospel that is for all people! God has come "to seek and save" (Luke 19:10). The Good News is for Israel, for the lost sinner, and even for the follower of the Savior. Jesus' first coming as the Suffering Servant reassures us of His return as the Glorious King! Let us then remember and prepare ourselves for His return. Spend time reading and meditating on His Word. This is what Advent asks us to do: simply remember, rest in His presence, and joyfully prepare for His return as the King to end all kings!

Joshua 1:7-9 (ESV) - *"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.** For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*