

Waiting for the Real Thing 3 Advent C

Christmas like Advent can't be faked. Did you hear about the guy who bought his wife a beautiful diamond ring for Christmas? A friend of his said, "I thought she wanted one of those sporty four-wheel-drive vehicles."

"She did," he replied. "But where am I gonna find a fake Jeep?"

Advent is a season you can not fake for obvious reasons. Advent is a season of hope and joy. The first scripture lesson today is full of hope and joy. "Sing aloud, O daughter Zion, shout, O Israel, rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more (Zephaniah 3:14-16). Now, that is a lot hope and joy for the dollar! There is nothing fake about these gifts from God.

Are you hopeful this Advent? Are you more hopeful than you were last Christmas? Are you joyful this Advent? Are you more so than last year? These are not silly questions – how would you answer? How would your family and friends answer? Have these gifts of hope and joy taken a downturn?

We prayed earlier that God might stir up His power ... and with great might come among us and ... let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us. People who pray such prayers know the source of hope and joy. It is a prayer of confidence despite gloomy forecasts.

It was a wonderful snow day for some last Wednesday. I missed having church and lunch following on Wednesday with our usual group. The fellowship is often very good with a lot of laughter. Instead Billy and I spent the entire day doing snow removal. There was fellowship as we waved to each other from a distance. Michal Lattomus brought us lunch from her home. It also was good – just the three of us.

Then I started to fret about the snow removal from the parking lots as it was getting later in the day and frigid forecasts were looming. Bob had not arrived yet. A call was place to his home. No answer. Then I got a call from Adel our treasurer and I fretted to her and said I was calling some one else since the lots would become one big block of ice. Then I called his mother in law and I got an answer and a cell phone number. And Bob said he would be at church late but he would get there. Bob gave me hope. I relaxed. I felt joyful and could finally tackle the rest of my sermon. However at 6:00 PM Bob was still not there! Relax. Stop spoiling the Advent spirit! Sit with Jesus for a little while. Bob said he would be there late!

It is hard to let go when one is working hard at being responsible and of course no one else can be as responsible as you (or me)! When life gets hectic the words of John's gospel come to mind and with a big chorus we sing, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance! (And don't tell me some story about how many famous relatives you have in town!)."

John was pretty upset as they came to be baptized by him. I think he could relate to how I was obsessing about the parking lots. John was ready to take an ax to the trees and cut them down because he wanted the candidates for baptism to know how serious the Messiah's coming is. I wanted to find another plow.

I confess that I would rather sing than yell at people. I think I would rather sing along with the prophet Zephaniah or rejoice always and again rejoice with St. Paul. It's more fun than getting upset and losing my cool. Besides, how much do I trust God to stir up the power that will help and deliver in time of need? Bill and I could not do the snow removal ourselves.

That is what is so hopeful about this season of Advent. There is an expectation and longing for deliverance. Even when deliverance is simply having parking lots plowed how seriously do we take God when we are told that the one coming will baptize much better than John ever could! Or in my context, the guy with the big shovel on his truck is coming and he will plow much better than you Bob Lebron could ever. Because his name is Bob Knilans and he knows what he's doing.

There is hope for those of us who want to take the joy out of this season and throw hope away because we won't wait long enough to see. The promise of God is sure. The promise of God is sealed in heaven. The promise of God can be depended on. Amen.