

“Let the light come!”

December 2, 2007

Text: Isaiah 2:1-5, Romans 13:11-14

I.

Let the light come ... the light of Christmas. Christmas is all about promise and hope. The hope of love given a new face—the timeless, mystery-laden face of the baby Jesus, born in the humble surroundings of a *Bethlehem* manger.

The birth of a baby ... a symbol of the hope and promise ...

Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given. Every year, in Advent, leading to Christmas, we reiterate the proclamation.

And with it, our hopes are rekindled ... our vision is re-energized and re-focused. In him we hope ... and through him the promises of God shine forth. ***Let the light come!***

But, of course, there's more. With God and the realm of God, there always is. To begin with there's waiting. As a people we don't wait well, do we? I know I sure don't. I don't like waiting for much of anything ... in traffic, at Costco, at the bank, in the supermarket. Waiting wears on my nerves.

Advent asks us to wait. It doesn't ask us to fall asleep or to get lazy. In fact, it asks us to wait with expectation and focus ... and to *wait with eyes of love* that *the light* might truly fill our hearts and lift our spirits.

That's the key: the LOVE that *the light* brings. ***Let the light come!***

But the waiting also has another message. It reminds us that, most likely, we're too busy. Are you too busy? Indeed, we are a busy people, aren't we?

What the waiting of Advent calls us to is a deeper, more poignant sensitivity to the world around us ... which we can't experience if we're too busy ... if we don't truly ***Let the light come.***

II.

A businessman, who prides himself on efficiency, needs a few things at the supermarket. He estimates that it will take him 30 minutes to complete his shopping.

So, off he goes, determined to be out of the supermarket in 30 minutes ... because with attention to detail and good planning, he thinks you can actually feel like you have some control of your life.

So there he is, flying through the aisles of the supermarket, picking up this ... picking up that ... until he runs into an elderly couple looking at laundry detergent with their cart blocking the aisle. They're fumbling through coupons and debating the merits of *Tide* vs. *Wisk*. Finally, they move on ... but already, our expert shopper is delayed. *Unbelievable*, he thinks to himself.

Then, he encounters them again at the dairy aisle. The elderly man pulls out half-gallon containers, one at a time; his wife squints at the labels, shakes her head, then hands them back to him. The businessman knows exactly what he wants, but he can't get at it until *the older couple* make their choice and move on.

Again, thinking to himself: *unbelievable ...I can't believe this!* He's getting increasingly upset with this older couple.

At the checkout line, our harried shopper quickly moves to what looks to be the least encumbered lane. Sure enough, there's the elderly couple, slowly—O so slowly—unloading their shopping cart, checking each item against their list. The businessman scans the other lines for a better option. There are none. He frustrated.

However, the elderly woman begins to notice the man's basket (with only a few items in it), then whispers to her husband. Whereupon the elderly man says to our impatient businessman, in a gentle and friendly voice: *Hey, why don't you go ahead of us? You only have a few things.*

The frenetic businessman is caught off guard ... as feelings of guilt and shame begin to seep into his consciousness ... like when you've had bad thoughts about someone and in the next instant they're nice to you. It sort of ruins the moment.

Suddenly, he feels diminished, petty and small. *Ouch!* And about all he can get out is, *O, no, no ... that's okay; I'm in no hurry.* And then he has an *ah hah* moment, a moment when the absurdity and ridiculousness of things smacks us in the face. It's like, HELLO! What are you doing?

III.

Now and then, we want to say that to ourselves, don't we? *What are you doing? What's all the rush? Slow down ... look around you.*

Advent is a time to wake up—yet again—and see the beauty around us ... the good in one another; and get beyond all the petty child's play. The manic efficiency in supermarkets ... the busy, busy, busy ... with no time for restful reflection ... no time to sort things out, think things through.

Advent urges us to let the fullness of the moment (the NOW of our lives) sink in ... to where we really see what is all about us ...

- People ... people like us ... the best people of our lives ...
- new people; but again, people like us ...
- and every day, every moment, opportunities to share love and be drawn closer together.

Let the light come!

In our reading from Romans, Paul uses some good Advent language. Check it out: He's making an appeal to the Romans. He hasn't yet been to Rome so, in a sense, it's a general appeal.

You know what time it is, he begins. ...how it is now the moment for you to wake from your sleep ...for salvation is nearer to us, everyday. Always, the night is far gone, the day is near.

What this means, friends, is that the *light of God's purposes* is on the move ... every day ... all the time. And Advent, leading to Christmas, is a reminder.

Let the light come! That's God's most fervent wish, God's most vibrating hope. *The night is far gone, the day is near. Let the light come!*

The prophet **Isaiah** echoes this same theme: ***Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!*** Come! Come, indeed! It's Advent and God is coming. Always, the *day that is near* is the day that brings the light of God's new creation. A child is born; a son is given. ***Let the light come!***

IV.

In a raucous mining town called **Roaring Camp**, a baby was born. Author, Brete Harte doesn't say whether the month was December or not, but it might have been.

Roaring Camp was inhabited strictly by men; and they were a dirty, nasty group. Disputes were settled by gunfire ... and everything about **Roaring Camp** was filthy.

The baby was born to Cherokee Sally, who's drifted into town one day ... but sadly, she died giving birth ... so **to** these unruly, nasty, dirty men fell the task of caring for Sally's baby.

To begin with, they laid the baby in a shoebox with some rags in it ... and immediately realized that wouldn't do. And so a man was sent 80 miles on a mule to get a rosewood cradle, the best money could buy.

With the cradle in place, the rags obviously wouldn't do ... so another man was sent off to purchase the softest lace he could find.

With the baby neatly resting in the newly laced cradle, the men began to notice, with notable dismay, the filthy floor and the unsightly walls ... and soon they were scrubbed spotless and refurbished ... and then the windows ... and soon new curtains were bought.

Soon, when the usual needs of the baby emerged, the men found themselves radically cleaning up their language ... and soon they began shaving and cleaning the clothing, wanting to look respectable in the baby's presence.

In the mythical town of **Roaring Camp**, a baby is born ... and soon the whole town is transformed.

V.

The night is gone, friends, the day is near.

And so, to us, God's message of Advent sounds out: ***Let the light come!***

- The light that no darkness can put out.
- The light that can change the hearts of people everywhere ...
- the light that can redirect us ... help us to refocus and to awaken to the hopes and promises of God's purposes ...

Let the light come! ... at the Annapolis summit, with the Israelis and Palestinians ... in the neighborhoods of South Florida, where everyday, it seems, violence rises up and senselessly takes the life of an innocent person (NFL football star Sean Taylor's death this past week casts a pall of sadness over all of us).

Let the light come! Wherever there is hopelessness and despair ... wherever the darkness of the night resists giving way to the day that is near ... wherever the shadows and anxiety of our unfinished lives seem to have taken over.

Let the light come! Let a baby be born!

All praise be unto God! Amen!

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