

And So the Journey Begins...**November 27, 2022****Matthew 24:36-44**

We're only at the beginning of Advent, and foremost in our minds is the time-honoured question asked by every impatient child on a long road trip: "Are we there yet?" In one sense, the answer to the question is "yes" – because we know that the promise has already been fulfilled: the birth of the long expected one happened in poverty and obscurity in a faraway land two thousand years ago. It's a done deal...and yet in another sense, the answer to the question in this season of hope and expectation is "no" – we're not there yet. We'd like the Prince of Peace to make a return engagement to our blue planet, and that's part of the Advent hope we express. At some level we anticipate a second coming ... don't know where or when, but it's ours to imagine, ours to dream.

In reality, Advent is three-dimensional. The first and most obvious dimension is the familiar story that's about to unfold...the story of the incarnation. As we make our own journey through Advent, we'll have a growing awareness of another journey – a story that involves a man and a woman, a baby, a manger, angels, shepherds and stars. In song and story we'll feel like we've stepped back in time because the power of imagination to create the smell of the hay and the song of the angels and the cry of the baby will transport us. But we're not there yet.

Our Advent travels don't just take us to gaze in awe and wonder at a baby, though. The second dimension is inviting Jesus to be born in us... to be born in us today, as the familiar carol says. There's something about this season that anticipates a new and personal experience of the Holy living and working in our lives....an opportunity for a fresh start, a second chance, a willingness to be changed. But we're not there yet.

The third and final dimension is probably the hardest to wrap our heads around, but this is the season when we imagine, pray for and seriously anticipate the completion of God's vision, the Kingdom as Jesus called it, a time when weapons of war will no longer be useful, and the lion will lie down with the lamb.....a world

where evil has finally been defeated, and peace and justice reign. But, heaven knows, we're not there yet.

My hope is that we'll all try to balance the consumerism that dominates this season with holy and expectant awe at what it means to incarnate God in our lives.... today, tomorrow, and in all our tomorrows. My hope is that we'll take control over our Advent journey, to be clear about just what it is that we're waiting for, and where we're headed.....for ultimately, the question, "Are we there yet?" can best be answered not by a simple yes or no, but by a process of living and urging into being all those things that we hope and pray for.

If we hope for peace on earth, we'll get there eventually by living peacefully. If we hope for justice to prevail, then we get there by being just and fair. The gospel we read today is all about finding the holy at unexpected times; about being ready: ready to experience grace, ready to be surprised. So this Advent, Lord, help us to wait, to watch, to be aware, to anticipate, and to live into the surprising grace and the often unexpected presence of God - who came to us in the person of Jesus long ago, and whose final triumph we give witness to with every action of our lives today. For this we pray and together say Amen.

The Ven. Nancy Adams