

Sermon
11/27/22

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So today we find ourselves in the first Sunday in Advent, which is the first Sunday in the church calendar year. And so we've changed to a new gospel for the year, Matthew (where we'll be hearing a lot more about gnashing of teeth) and during this season, we use the color blue to remind us that it is a *season of hope*. (You could also use the color purple, but here we're doing a little mix of both.)

So when I think about "blue," I think about the vast skies, like my time in Montana, the Big Sky State, where you can see the sky stretching out all around you, or here, the oceans vast.

And why is that helpful? I think because it helps put us into our proper place, right? When you're feeling overwhelmed and stressed, it is helpful to be out where the sky is magnificent and huge, or by the ocean or other things that are much bigger than yourself. They help to put our problems in perspective.

I know I just triggered a reminder of my first days at Compass Housing, coming from Montana where I *never* had to parallel park, in my big blue pickup, that was a stick shift! It was very traumatic, right. And I put a dent in my vehicle the very first week trying to get it into a tiny little spot with a concrete post next to it, and I was just like, ah! – and then I went to work where people had *real* problems.

Right? Sometimes we need things to help put us in perspective.

So that's, I think, a little bit about today's message, and about the season of Advent, about hope. What we remember during this season is not our own need so much to prepare, but that God has been working for us in the past, is with us now, working within us and around us, and is working *into the future* for the sake of all creation. God has done God's work.

And so again about this perspective: God has His plan, that frees us to be about *our work*. And what does God say "our work" is? We heard the choir this morning, so that's a great build up:

God created us to praise God.

That's our work. Hopefully that helps put things into a different perspective for you. That we are here to love the Lord our God with our entire being. All that makes us who and what we are, and our neighbor as ourselves.

God is coming again, yes. That end time shouldn't be scary, like we hear about in Matthew today, but more about like Our Old Testament reading and the readings from Romans. God is here for us, *Emmanuel*, God with us, knowing us, loving us, calling us back constantly into faithfulness and right relationship. We started the service with confession and forgiveness because it recognizes us for who and what we are: a broken, hurting people, even a people doing their best, who by sins of omission and

commission still need a God who knows and loves and understands; who sees us, forgives us, and loves us.

God here with us.

So we are here, doing what we are called to do. We find those tasks, how we love the neighbor, in the vocations that we have. (And I know everybody here is probably saying, "Here goes Pastor Kristy on her 'vocations' again!")

So, I talk about "vocation" almost every Sunday in my congregation, and they probably *still* couldn't tell you what it is. So I'm going to tell you what it is again:

The vocations that we have we encounter every day of our lives in the different roles that we play. So, right now my vocation is "preacher." I am to be the best preacher that I can be with the gifts that God gave me.

I am also wife, daughter, sister, aunt, student, driver, blah, blah, blah – all of those things I have to fulfill to the best of my ability with the gifts that God gave me.

Some of the vocations that we are called to demand us to stand up and speak about justice. Some of our vocations ask us to humble ourselves and learn to love and forgive in ways that maybe we don't feel so inclined to do.

Our vocations ask things of us that make us look at our lives perhaps in a new way. Everything that we do is what we are doing in the kingdom of God. Everything that we do is a part of who we are.

Luther was so good at talking about this, right?

Even sweeping the streets, cleaning up the dung after the animals, is an important and beautiful thing in the eyes of God, because it's *something that needs to be done*.

Some of our vocations of course, we don't like as much as others. I do not particularly like being a driver, especially at certain times of the day on I-5. But I'm still to be the best driver I am able to be, following the law, being courteous (if something needs to be said, it should be said privately, in the closed car context!)

Right?

These roles make us look outside of ourselves for the sake of the other, because we were not put here to be alone. We were put here to be in relationship and in relationship, into larger relationships, into *community*, where we can use our gifts and receive the giftedness of others.

Waiting is not easy. Preparing is not easy. Forgiving is not easy. Sometimes it feels like *living* is not easy. And what would Jesus say to that?

Just take the next breath.

I am here with you.

I am here with you as life as you know it in this moment.

I am here with you in the life that is to come, that we can only imagine.

You are mine.

We are reminded of this gift of God with us in the past, in the present and into the future, in the waters of baptism where we are put to death and raised to new life.

And also in this meal, where you will be invited today to taste the body broken and the blood poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sin, for new life, for the possibilities that relations hold for us.

And most importantly, for strength. Because our God, a loving, forgiving God who invites us here to this place, also propels us out of the doors of this sanctuary in more ways than one, into the world, so that others might experience through you God's gifts of forgiveness, mercy, and love.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.