

The Third Sunday of Advent  
11-12-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Isaiah 35: 1-10     God is Creating a new place and the Holy shall be there
- The Magnificat     Song of Mary – My Soul proclaims the Greatness of God
- James 5: 7-10     Be Patient. Don't grumble about others
- Matthew 11: 2-11     John the Baptist questions and hears about Jesus  
                                 Jesus praises John the Baptist.

### Introduction

Advent is not an event, but rather a season. It is a time we journey through. Today, I would like to look at some aspects of the Advent journey that have been highlighted in our bible readings. These aspects are:-

Acceptance  
Expectation  
Patience and Obedience  
Joy

So, let us explore these themes, not only here and now for Advent, but also for the whole of our life's Christian journey.

### Acceptance

We begin our Advent journey, by first deciding that there is something to accept, in the Christmas Story.

Before Mary's Song of Praise that we had for the Psalm today we hear these words from Mary, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' (Luke 1:38)

Accepting Jesus can be challenging though. For Mary it meant a pregnancy she was not fully in control of. Accepting Jesus for us, means handing over the control of our lives to God. It means we are no longer the final arbiter of what is good for our lives, and God is. It involves the giving over of the control of our lives to God. This may seem challenging, but it is the most liberating thing we can do with our lives. Once we accept Jesus, we are free to live our lives, in tune with the God who created us.

We begin our Advent journey by accepting Jesus into our Lives.

## Expectation

Once we have accepted Jesus, we can live with the expectation that God will be at work in our lives. We are never alone. God is always with us through the Holy Spirit within us. Accepting Jesus means that although we may face challenges in life, there is still Hope.

We hear of such an expectation in the reading from the prophet Isaiah today.

The desert will bloom, the blind will see, the deaf will hear.

Isaiah is letting the Israelites know that despite their sins and turning away from God, they can repent. And as they repent and return to trusting God, God will be there, both for them, and with them.

John the Baptist is the ultimate of living with expectation. Despite the many challenges he faced, he looked forward to the coming of Jesus. As he was jailed, he sent word to find out if Jesus was actually the one, and in the echoes of the prophet Isaiah, we hear the words of Jesus himself:-

‘Go and tell John what you hear and see:<sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.’ (Matthew 11:4-6)

Expectation is such a wonderful gift. How wonderful it is to see children expectantly waiting for Christmas. The expectation, the anticipation, all adds to making Christmas such a joyous celebration.

Imagine the opposite. Imagine there is nothing good to look forward too. This of course, is living without Hope. The opposite of what our Christian Faith gives us.

Is the expectation of being at peace with Jesus something you long for, and look forward to? Is it something you even think about?

As Christians, we should be people who live with expectation. Expectation of what God will do, here and now in our lives, and expectation in the wonderful hope we have in what lies beyond the world we can currently hear, and taste, and see.

## Patience and Obedience

And as we live in expectation, we are called to do it, with Patience and Obedience.

In a little book I have about Virtues, it says “Patience” is a virtue. In this instant, fast paced world we live in, it doesn’t seem to me at all like patience is a virtue. When I was a little younger than I am now, there was a way of buying things called “layby”. You paid a deposit, they put the item away off the shelves for you, and you had a certain amount of time to come and pay instalments until the item was paid in full, and then you could collect it. This whole process required a certain amount of patience.

I’m not sure if this concept even exists now. I saw recently, that the Australian Company Afterpay, founded less than ten years ago, which allows you to get the item up front, and then pay it off through your credit card at a later date, has a market capitalization of about \$15 billion. There doesn’t appear to be anything very patient about the society we live in, at the moment.

Our Advent journey and the Christian life in general calls for us to live patiently, as we await the return of Jesus.

In today’s reading from the letter of James, we are admonished to be patient. James uses the example of a crop growing, getting early and late rains. Even with the scientific advances we have in preparing the soils, and genetically modifying the plants, crops still need time to grow. Farmers need patience.

We need to learn to live more patiently. God’s timing may not always match our timing. Patience definitely is a virtue to live by, and seasons like Advent and Lent are such great opportunities to learn to live more patiently.

Obedience goes with patience, in that if we have an expectation of God’s presence in our lives, we are called to live into it. As Christians we are called to live in obedience with God’s ways, not to be saved, but because we already know we have been saved.

In the letter to James today, one of the ways we are called to obedience, is to not grumble about others. I believe this is a big challenge to live into. But as it says in today’s reading:-

<sup>9</sup> Beloved do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

If we grumble, it affects the way we will be judged.

On our Advent Journey we are called to live with Patience and Obedience.

## Joy

The Advent Journey is to be one of Joy. The coming of Jesus was the fulfilment of the great expectation the Jewish people had, that a Messiah would come.

Mary says in the words of the Magnificat:-

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord:  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour

Even in the challenges and unknowns she faced, Mary had great Joy. The first disciples of Jesus were known for their Joyfulness.

As Christians today, as people who know the joy of God's presence in our lives, we are called to be joyful people.

Whilst Advent may be a more serious time of reflection in our Church Calendar, it is a time when we prepare to celebrate great Joy.

## Conclusion

As we prepare for Christmas this advent season, I pray that we will do it with an eager expectation of celebrating the birth of Jesus.

I also pray that we will be enabled to live with patience and obedience as we await the second coming of Jesus.

And in all this, I pray we will continue to be filled with the Joy, that God gives us through knowing Jesus. Amen.