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“Are You Looking for Jesus”

a Communion meditation by Rev. Roger P. Howard  
Luke 21:25-36; 11/29/09

In the first year that my family lived in Moon, having come from 340 miles away in another state, our children were nine and seven during that Advent of 1995. A very kind and thoughtful Santa Claus came to visit them to assure them that he had not lost them during their move to a far away place. During his wonderful visit to our home, but toward the end, when he indicated he would have to leave to further prepare for Christmas, the children were searching out through the windows for Santa’s sleigh and reindeer. It was dark in the evening by then, but Santa pointed out the rear window of the house while he made a quick getaway through the front door. Our children stared out the window until they identified a red-colored brightness about one block behind the house as Rudolf’s nose. Whether they actually saw Rudolf or just a red Christmas tree light, I do not know, but they were certain as a result of their anticipation of seeing what Santa had pointed out.

I don’t know if you had the same feelings when you were young and naïve as I did. But the day after a presidential election, I thought the world would actually look very different – that it would be truly a new world. By the election of 1960 and ’68 and pretty much all the major elections, I maintained the hope that the world would be somehow brighter the morning after, as the new president would change it! I suppose as we get older we become jaded a bit, at least, and don’t expect the sun, the moon, and the stars to change, even if domestic and foreign policies do. Even a drastic change in those policies, which tend to be less drastic than the political rhetoric ahead of time promises, do not have that dramatic effect on our senses in the morning – not even on the morning of January 21<sup>st</sup>!

If you are thirty years of age or older, do you remember the anticipation you had for Christmas when you were five, seven or ten? You hoped more than we can any longer imagine for some particular gift under the tree, or the visit of the family members, and so on. Perhaps that anticipation is not quite as breath-taking as it was at that age. We know no present, no matter how grand or meaningful, can quite compare with a new bicycle or toy truck or Barbie. So, with what kind of anticipation do you look forward to Christmas? Surely it’s not for the crowded throng of shoppers on December 26<sup>th</sup>, unless you own the store!

There are two events involved with our faith for which we hope in great anticipation during Advent. The first, of course, is the coming of the celebration of the birth of our Savior – his birth being two thousand years ago, but another celebration coming in three-plus weeks. The signs of that coming celebration are omnipresent in church and in our culture – in fact, you can’t avoid them if you want to. Personally, when the decorations are up by November 1<sup>st</sup>, by the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, I am thoroughly exhausted with them – and the butchered carols in the stores do NOT make me want to spend, but to run screaming from the mall!

But the second spiritual event is a bit more subtle at this point, and many Christians have completely ignored it. The signs of that coming are not so friendly, and certainly are not ubiquitous – indeed, you won’t see any gracing home displays or in the shopping malls – without question! Our passage has Jesus telling his disciples the signs – “signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Well, that doesn’t sound like a very pleasant hope and anticipation for the season!

However, as Christians, these are wonderful signs indeed! They indicate that Jesus is coming back – that God is taking over the earth and bringing in his Kingdom! And God brings in his Kingdom as Christ descends from the clouds and

dwells among us – very similarly to when he came to dwell among us at his birth. He comes in the best of times and in the worst of times – to be with us through our human journeys and on to eternity!

And in case you really aren't looking forward to THAT coming, because it will mean the end of Christmas gifts under the tree or out in the driveway, with the new Lexis wrapped in a huge bow – as the commercials would have us dream, you'll have better than a Lexis or Mercedes or Rolls – you'll have your own cloud-mobile! And God tells us that in THAT kingdom, he will wipe every tear from our eyes; death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, and all things will be new – really new – not like the day after an election.

Another amazing aspect of this heavenly Kingdom is that it starts now! At least, we can get a foretaste of that kingdom if we are looking for it – looking for Jesus, making room for him in our hearts, and practicing our worship for when we shall worship him face-to-face. That's what Advent is also about – anticipating the initiation of God's Kingdom breaking into our world – and into our hearts with Christ. And there is a foretaste of the heavenly wedding banquet of Christ and Christ's church – and it is right here! You can see it if you look as hard as our children were searching for Rudolf, and you can taste it as you come to this table expecting the presence of Christ! AMEN.