

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL

ANTICIPATION

MARK 1:1-3

Welcome

Prayer Needs – Ronald and Nuri Hernandez, Madison, Ann, Preston

Mark 1:1-3 TPT – Prepare you hearts...

Anticipation -

*We can never know about the days to come
But we think about them anyway
And I wonder if I'm really with you now
Or just chasin' after some finer day*

*Anticipation, anticipation
Is makin' me late
Is keepin' me waitin'*

What are you anticipating the most in these days?

The stuff that needs to get done – the things that are done – the dreams hoped for the dreams lost...

Today, the season between Thanksgiving and Christmas that many of us recognize as Advent is the biggest frenzy of retail spending. More than half of it, hundreds of billions of dollars a year, is spent as we celebrate the birth of the homeless Son of God – we are literally up by 10%

(And he got only three measly presents. One of them was myrrh. What baby wants myrrh?) If we are honest it can be a challenge to choose compassion over consumption that is chasin after some finer day....

The Church Father Irenaeus has been quoted as first saying *'the glory of God is the heart of man fully alive'*. Which implies that many do not live fully alive.

The Coming of Jesus – Advent. It is such a profound reality that bears so much thought – into a world ruled and dominated dictators, unjust systems of poverty, oppressive slavery, racial bigotry and hatred God comes – not as a military deliverer, not as a wealthy philanthropist, not as an earthly Prince but as a child born into poverty, in a race despised, to a teenage mother giving birth in a cave...

This is NOT how we would write the story of deliverance and freedom...big impressive absolutely we could anticipate that now couldn't we....but to Anticipate this King is about the heart?

- **It really does matter what kind of anticipation captures us....**

As we enter this advent season the fair question is what kind of Anticipation has captured me...the most? The empty promise of consumerism or the real compassion of a God who mess of fractured creation and humanity and revealed Hope. The anticipation that creation has felt since the fall that was revealed in Christ.

Beloved Advent is an invitation to Good News - to be present to the God who is with us! Today in this season we proclaim Christ has come and continues to come to man is the One who is making this world a home again!

The Gospel of Mark begins with these words 1:3 *'...make ready the way of the Lord...'* *'Prepare you heart....'*

*And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips*

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- The assumption behind the declaration 'make ready' is that those hearing were 'not ready'.
- I like the way the TPT translation clarifies that it is not something 'out there' that needs to be 'changed' its whats 'in here - the empire and the rulers in your life must change.
- Advent – is about Anticipation but what anticipation is capturing your heart...

We live in a world preoccupied with Anticipation for peace and safety...and in a real way we can see this in how lives are lived attached to 'what' they believe will bring peace...and safety.

Advent is not just a season but a call to **True Anticipation** to live connected to our real source of Hope and Peace.

Somewhere in the 4th century, not long after Christianity was no longer illegal in the Roman Empire, the church faced a new struggle.

- The church went from being persecuted to being accepted.
- Men and women of the church were faced with a new challenge to their faith—**safety and comfort**.

So church fathers intentioned to invite followers of Jesus to make better sense of their life – because in peace and safety their lives were increasingly attached to the world its systems.

- So as a result somewhere in the 4th Advent began. First as a time for new converts to ready themselves for their Baptism and later as a formal season of embracing the coming of Jesus—literally as the beginning of the year -Advent!
- Not that Jesus had not come but men and women were being invited to 'declutter' and deal with entanglements of a system that was beginning to define them.
- Rather than being defined by their love for God and their neighbor – other things had begun to order their lives.
- Advent became a call to followers of Jesus – this is who you are!
- Even to the point of the early Church establishing a calendar that begins in December not January – as a declaration that as followers of Jesus our lives are being ordered by Jesus.
- December then is the beginning of the Church Calendar.

I would suggest there is wisdom to embracing this intentionality for followers of Jesus in the 21st Century.

- Perhaps there is great wisdom to proclaim that our year actually begins in the Advent—the Coming of Jesus as our King which is why the Church in the past has often used the color purple to proclaim the royalty of Jesus as King.
- **Advent** meaning *the coming* - not that God has left but that we often become distracted discouraged and need reminding - Emmanuel - **God has come** into this world and proclaimed life!

So I want to submit that Advent is choice to be Present and Proclaim reality as it really is - to reset our calendar and hearts - we do have a King and we are members of that Kingdom – not the empire!

- The politics and problems of the world around us are secondary to what is actually real.

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So as we begin this season - I want to invite us to hear the words of Mark again - 'make ready'.

- What am I doing to make space in my life for Jesus?
- I am not suggesting that we all have to have an advent wreath with advent candles.

I do want to suggest that this means we choose to embrace True Anticipation.

- I don't think that means we have a 24/7 play-list on our streaming service but that we intention to live Present.
- Present to your own life and the life of others around you....
- Here is what that means - the real story of people is filled with loads of disappointments, failure and pain – a little bit like a confused teenage girl who has just discovered she is pregnant or farm boys taking care of sheep who were so despised that they could not testify in court because of who they were – they were not respectable....
- And yet this is where the story of Worship begins at the Coming of Jesus and don't forget Wise men who come from another country.....all in wonder of this child who has come to them!
- Beloved – Anticipation - is to be captured by the God who has come – into our actual world not with 3 points and a lesson – He came to man and became so they could become...in partnership.

Let me try to say this another way - Denise and I were engaged and asked a college professor friend to do our premarital counseling so we could get marriage 'right'

- So we sat with these friends through 5-6 sessions and that is the reason we have been married for 40 years and most days enjoy being with one another.
- Now if you think that is true - allow me to be very clear is stating while we had some great counsel...that is NOT what made our relationship work. That is like saying you can build a house because you read a house plan. You actually have to pick up pieces of lumber to build a house.
- We had to actually enter into one another's life and live it together!

Learning to be present to each other and to God as we walk this life is the only reality that has given us strength and hope.

- You see I sat in those sessions with the same passion I did so many other types of training in ministry....beginning with a basic idea that if I have the right information that can fix anything.
- Beloved that information has to become something living. In our case we actually had to begin living life together - making choices of how we would spend our resources and life together.
- **Advent is the proclamation that the God came into our life and to give us life!**
 - He did not just send an instruction booklet He became and He comes to us.
 - Jesus full of Grace and Truth.
 - He came into the reality of mankind - filled with all kinds of suffering and brokenness not with an instruction booklet but with compassion, mercy and forgiveness.
 - And that beloved invites us to wonder and worship! He came – and He still comes.

Beloved there is a narrative in Christian circles that proclaims something like this;

- God is waiting for man to turn and get their act together and He will then come.
- We even quote verses to reinforce this narrative - that call for change – **If/then...**
- **Beloved in our celebration of Advent we proclaim that God came into what man could not make better or improve and proclaimed life and continues to come!**

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When this reality begins to lay hold of our heart.

- Advent can become such a moment of Anticipation no matter the situations.
- In the face of suffering pain - God came and He comes - that is called Grace beloved and its in the mess we can proclaim there is another way live fully alive - that is called Truth.
- Paul says it this way in 1 Thess 5 be on the alert - because we are children who are alert and awake put on faith, hope and love.

What does that look like?

- Often think about putting on God's truth are a **response** to the lies of the world and the failures of man.
- **But here is a thought the Grace of God - includes faith hope and love all existed before mans failure!**

So to put on Faith Hope and Love is to put on God's imagination - the actual way He sees reality.

A few nights ago we were talking about this and Logan made a reference to the intercession of Jesus being full of Grace and Truth.

- You see we often think Jesus intercession and intervention is motivated by what is missing or lacking...
- I mean that is how I experienced my father for the most part.

But what if the primary content of intercession of Jesus is about what He sees is true?

- Now lets put on our thinking cap - Jesus who spoke worlds into being (Col 2)
- We are just now seeing the depths of cell formation and its mind blowing!
- Here is my point we often live unaware of what God had in mind when He formed us and OTHERS!
 - What if intercession if about the Boundless beauty of an Image bearer of God.
 - What it advent is about becoming present to what God has to say about you and others?
 - What He sees and Knows

What if Anticipation in this advent season is about proclaiming what God sees?

- Paul said it this way in 1 Thess 5 *Encourage the fainthearted - help the weak - be patient with everyone....*sounds like the heart of God towards all of humanity.

That kind of posture requires choice - and that is what Anticipation is about.

- What does that mean? For most of us a choice to live differently than we normally do.
- Worship and especially Prayer by its very nature are primarily formative - we tend to be formed by what we give our time and attention.
- Time and resources are to often left to the demands of others.
- Intention to have a Rhythm's and Routines of life in my time – this is good religion!
- For most of us this will mean a choice to simplify...walk slower, drive slower, listen longer...

*And tomorrow we might not be together; I'm no prophet and I don't know nature's ways
So I'll try and see into your eyes right now, And stay right here 'cause these are the good old days*

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The Glory of God? The heart of man fully alive - to the God who is present who has come and comes.

Beloved Advent is an invitation to Good News - to be present to the God who is with us! Today in this season we proclaim Christ has come and continues to come to man and will one day come again to fully restore all that has been marred and disfigured by sin and brokenness.

Closing Prayer

My King Jesus

You are the Beginning and the End,
the First and the Last,
the Author and Finisher of our faith
who was, is and is to come.

I bow my heart before You now and humbly
submit to Your will, Your way, Your plan.

In a season filled with distractions of many kinds,
may I be different this year.

May You be my first thought each day,
and my last thought as I lay my head on the pillow.

Give me focus to look at everything in my world
through the lens of Your truth and love.

A love that left heaven to become a tiny, vulnerable, newborn baby.
What a sacrifice!

May my worship now be lived out in how I notice,
love, and care for everyone You've placed in my sphere,
and those to whom You send me.

May I hold nothing back, trusting You will provide.

May I miss no opportunity to worship fully for Your good gifts already given.

Open my spiritual eyes to see the new gifts You place before me.

Surprise me with Your abundance, precious Lord.

To You be all glory and praise; my Redeemer, my Savior, my Friend.

Amen.

Communion

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