

Give Advent a Chance

Most of December is in the Advent season. The Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve and runs for twelve days, or forty if you count up to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, as I like to do. Of course, there are preparations to be made, and many (too many?) carol services, in the first three weeks of December. But, please, let's not lose Advent. Let it not be drowned out by the flood of pre-Christmas paraphernalia. Put the tree up as late as you dare, ideally on Christmas Eve. Give Advent a chance.



It is not for nothing that Advent begins the Christian Year. There is a hugely important truth here. The message of Advent is that Christ will return to this earth, with power and great glory, as Judge and Saviour – and our whole lives are to be lived in the light of that future fact. This is the big over-arching truth for how we are to live: not that he came as a baby, or even that he died and rose again (vitaly important though those things are), but that he is Lord of all, and will be Judge and Saviour, the end of this world and the beginning of a new and perfect world. We are to live our whole lives with this as the guiding light: Jesus Christ is the Judge of all, the only Saviour, the beginning and the end of all things.

It's not very fashionable to talk about judgment or the end of the world. But we so badly need to hear that message. Our human race can boast many magnificent achievements. Our creativity and ingenuity are astonishing (though not surprising, given that we are made in the image of God). But our pride, our prejudice, our intolerance, our inhumanity, our capacity for name-calling and bomb-dropping, our brokenness and sinfulness, mean that both judgment and salvation are absolutely necessary. They provide the framework and structure, the certainty and hope, that we need.

Advent is traditionally seen as a penitential season. Yes, but It is a season that reminds us to be ready for judgment. But it also reminds us to be ready for salvation. It is a season of anticipated joy.

*Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain ...
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.*

Advent greetings

+ Donald

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