

ADVENT SUNDAY - 2005

Nic Denny-Dimitriou - 27th November 2005

Advent Sunday – main themes (also as in the Collect for the day, used at the start of the service lighting the first candle of our Advent Wreath.)

- ✓ What guides how you live? Choice of values, interactions with the world at large, where you fit into life...
 - ✓ “Philosophy of life” – High-sounding phrase, but popular these days
 - ✓ For some – clearly thought through, deliberate
 - ✓ Others – subconscious, yet still guides and determines how they live
 - ✓ Values and worldview
 - ✓ Illustrated (perhaps facetiously) by these bumper stickers seen around:
 - ✓ “Born to shop” – light-hearted, but very materialistic
 - ✓ “Life is a B.I.T.C.H. ... and then you die!” – cynical worldview!
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- ✓ We all know the Christmas story well
 - ✓ And probably most of us remember the explanations of the Season of Advent... (Holy season, penitent, waiting and expectation – see bud in front of altar to symbolise that; first coming; “Christ will come again”)
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- ✓ A season to re-focus on philosophy of life
 - ✓ Preparation to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ into God’s created world
 - ✓ Created by a loving God
 - ✓ Created for relationship with God
 - ✓ Designed for community (mix of independence & interdependence)
 - ✓ Designed to respond to God’s offer of relationship / of assurance of salvation...
 - ✓ ...Made known and experienced primarily in Jesus Christ,
 - ✓ And to enjoy this relationship with God forever.

I also suggest that we know life is best lived, not when lived aimlessly, but when lived

- ✓ In knowledge of these things
- ✓ When lived in a relationship with God – freely chosen by us, even though it has been initiated by God
- ✓ Knowing that our ultimate reality and destiny is greater than our physical, mental and spiritual existence on earth. Our ultimate reality and destiny is to enjoy the fullness of knowing God beyond the constraints of time and physical creation.

That is what roots people in fulfilment, no matter their circumstances or surroundings; the fulfilment arises from being in tune with God and living in ways consistent with how God created us.

It brings to mind the often-quoted words of St. Augustine: God has made us for himself, and we are restless until we find our peace in God; he elaborated that it was as if there was a God-shaped space within each of us, and true peace is never found until that space is filled by God, instead of all the other things we try to fill that space with.

Familiar words / readings at this time:

Isaiah – Immanu-el: “God in our midst”

Malachi – “All flesh shall see the salvation of our God”
(first and second comings)

Handel – “Messiah”

As disciples of God-in-Christ, our understanding of life is to be rooted in God who took the initiative to come into our midst, to bring the assurance of salvation and of God’s love, expressed fully in Jesus Christ.

Be open to that grace, that gift of God given us all, one of the greatest aspects of the gift being that God has taken the initiative, but leaves the choice of response to us.

I pray we may live our lives in keeping with God’s intentions / desires for us,

That our understanding of how life is best lived will consciously include relating to God, who gave us the gift of Jesus, the focus of our celebration at this time.

Close with Advent Prayer –

Advent Prayer:

We greet your coming, God, with wonder:

You come to be with us, yet you remain far greater than we can imagine.

You are near, yet your wisdom sets you apart from us.

You appear among us, yet we cannot describe your glory.

We greet your coming, God, with repentance:

We are satisfied with ourselves, but your presence exposes our sin and failure.

We are self-confident, but you challenge confidence in ourselves

We are proud of our understanding, but you show us that we do not know everything.

We greet your coming, God, with joy:

We had no true idea of what you are like,

But you have shown us yourself in Jesus Christ.

We felt our human life could be of no importance to you,

But you have shown its value by appearing among us as a man.

We are aware of the gulf between you and us, but you have bridged it with love.

God, we greet your coming, in Jesus Christ our Lord!