

Advent 1B – “Beginning”  
Rev. Jennifer Adams – November 30, 2008

We start with darkness and it begins like a poem that is really more like a prayer. A prayer that breaks the silence, and that carries in its words a profound longing to see God. And a prophet is always the first to speak. “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,” Isaiah prays, “so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil. O that you would come and make your presence known,” he says.

Before there is the light of the world, before there is light there is darkness, and before there are the angelic glorias of Christmas - there is this prophetic prayer that is Advent - this deep longing for God to come among us. For God to come among us and be with us. Emmanuel.

Before there is this miraculous revelation there is this simple yet intense and very human hope. And the prophets put words on it. And the gospels did too. The early church prayed it and the earlier Israelites made it into a psalm, “Restore us O God of hosts; show us the light of your countenance and we shall be saved. . . .Come among us, O God and save us.”

In the beginning of our church year (today, Advent one) there are words and the words are with us. And they are open kinds of words - without “the end” at the end of them.

Because there is no conclusion in Advent – no ending – no teaching that can be neatly wrapped up and carried home. Because in Advent what we do is begin.

And that’s all.

We begin by being awakened to possibility – endless, God-filled possibility. We begin by being alerted to the prayers that live inside of our hearts and inside of the heart of our world – prayers for justice, freedom, healing and peace -- we begin by putting words on our own longings – words that open us and lead us - we begin by allowing ourselves to hope – to hope that God will come.

And the rest is simply not yet.

The beginning and the here but not yet that is Advent.

And maybe the sun will be darkened and the stars will fall from heaven and the Son of Man will come in clouds with power and great glory.  
Or maybe it will happen on a relatively silent night, with angels hovering 'round and God will come small, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Maybe God will come as Isaiah said, as a gentle potter to hold us, mold us and shape us or maybe God will come as a King or a Judge or a Warrior dressed in an armor of light to rule over the whole world.

Maybe the heavens will be torn open and the mountains will quake and we won't possibly be able to miss the grand and holy entrance.

Or maybe Christ will come as one who is seeking shelter or food or clothing or friendship. Maybe Christ will come as one we could easily miss, as the neighbor who invites us simply to do and to be love in this world.

Maybe God will come in Matthew or Mark or Luke or John – as bread or wine or vine or teacher or healer -- or maybe Christ will come in the person sitting next to you in the pew.

Maybe God will come in glorious majesty like the collect said with trumpets breaking forth from the skies or maybe a young girl will conceive and from her small town will come forth the Messiah and we'll have to depend on the stories that the shepherds tell.

Maybe Christ will come on a donkey or on a bus or on a cross or in a garden or in a storm or on the beach or in obvious ways or less obvious ways or maybe God will come in all of those ways.

In Advent all we do is begin.

We begin to hope and we begin to watch. And in this beginning there are words and the words are with us. A prophet has spoken. The words are prayer and they open us up to our deep and inner longings and to the needs of our hungry world. And as they open us up our eyes and our hearts become more able to see God, to receive God and we begin to believe with all that we have that God will come, will come among us and be.