

A Word About Worship **Collect for Advent Two**

This Sunday, as we light the second candle on the Advent Wreath, the Collect begins with the following words:

*“Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets
to preach repentance and prepared the way for our salvation...”*

Today’s word is to ‘prepare’, an action, or the noun ‘preparation’ is what it looks like when we prepare for something or someone. Preparation is just another way of saying ‘getting ready.’ Advent is the time to ‘get ready for the celebration of God’s entrance into the world, God’s incarnation or taking-on-flesh-and-blood.

God’s way of entering into the world was a surprise. God didn’t show up as a huge flash of light or a disembodied cosmic voice from the heavens. Rather, according to the New Testament, God chose a surprising way to come to be with us, as one of us, as a person just like us. Yet the surprise was even greater still. For God didn’t show up as a wise person, a queen or king, or military general, yet as a helpless infant born in less than optimal circumstances. And it didn’t come without some preparation.

Mary, the undoubtedly-shocked young peasant woman of no social standing through whom God chose to come into the world, has been preparing for this birth for eight months now. Advent is the season that reminds us that we, too, need to prepare for the celebration of this birth—God’s surprise gift of God’s son, born in a manger, destined for a cross, a gift which, after all was given precisely “for us and our salvation.”

So if God chose to surprise us by coming into the world at all, and then chose an even greater surprise by coming into the world as flesh-and-blood, as one of us, then in Advent how do we prepare for this surprise? How do we prepare, get ready for God to come into our lives in equally surprising ways?

- One of the ways the Christian tradition has encouraged us to prepare for the coming of God into the world is by cleaning out our lives of all the things that get in the way of God’s ability to surprise us. What do you need to clean out of your life so that you will be able to see and hear God when God surprises you by coming into your life?
- Repentance suggests a physical way of thinking about our salvation. To repent literally means ‘to turn’ to reorient our whole selves, body and soul. The waiting of Advent reminds us that our spiritual life is a pilgrimage. It doesn’t happen all at once. Repentance means looking around at the direction we’re going, the path we’re on and noticing that the road we’ve often taken is not leading us toward the Bethlehem of our life.
- Most of all during Advent, we prepare for God’s surprising entry into the world as a child by cultivating our own childlike willingness to see, willingness to hear, willingness to see God in the least likely of wanted places. Seeing God in the faces of those we avoid or dislike, hear God’s voice calling us to turn towards different directions and take a new path.

Please know the parish leadership is available to listen, to pray with you, to be with you during this Advent Season. God’s love and ours, Nancy+