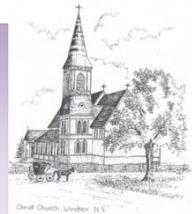


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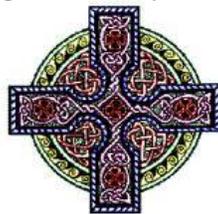
Rector's Ramblings

Times of transition signal occasions for renewal. We come to the ending of the Church Year and so to the beginning of yet another. The times of endings return us to our beginnings. Advent fast approaches. With the season of Advent, we begin again.

But what does it mean, these endings which bring us back to our beginnings? What does it mean to begin again? Are we simply trapped in a never-ending cycle, like squirrels on an endless fly-wheel? Is the cycle of the Church Year another dreary round of *the same old things in the same old places with the same old faces*? Or is it the dance of God's grace and glory in human lives?

We come to the end of a year of grace and take stock of our lives in the light of God's grace. It marks a kind of harvest time for our souls, as it were, a gathering up of the fruits of the past year's grace in our lives. But it means too, that we are returned to our beginning, to Him who is the foundation and meaning of our lives. The grace is God's Word revealed. As the Letter of James asks us,

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good behaviour his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom"(3.13). We are called to "the gentleness of wisdom."



In the greyness of the year, comes Christ the King (with apologies to T.S. Eliot). Christ strides across the barren fields of humanity to gather us into the barn of his righteousness and truth. We are returned to him who is *"the Lord our Righteousness,"* our Judge and King, the Shepherd and the Healer of all mankind, the Alpha and the Omega of all creation. All our endings and all our beginnings meet in him. Basil the Great (329-379 AD) reminds us something of what this might mean:

As all the fruits of the season come to us in their proper time, flowers in spring, corn in summer and apples in autumn, so the fruit for winter is talk.

Talk, you may protest, thank you very much, but we have had enough talk, too much talk in fact, especially, no

doubt, preachers' talk! But talk about what, you might ask? What is the talk in the times of endings, the fruit for winter's evenings, the talk which marks the occasions for renewed beginnings?

Surely, it is God's talk, God's Word and no other, God's Word making his talk in us. For apart from God's talk, our talk is vain and destructive, as St. James points out with such graphic directness: *"The tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous member ... With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God."* Such are the contradictions in us. *"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing."* As he rightly observes, *"My brethren, this ought not to be so."* But it is. As he rightly notes, *"no human being can tame the tongue."*

What, then, can be said either by us or about us? Not much. Yet what is wanted is that we and our words, our souls and our very being, should be brought under the wisdom and the Word of God, *"for both we and our words are in his hand,"* as The Wisdom of Solomon puts it. What is

wanted is that his Word should take shape in us.

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good behaviour his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”

In the gentleness of wisdom. It is a wonderful phrase which captures beautifully the meaning of Wisdom’s prayer: *“May God grant that I speak with judgment and have thoughts worthy of what I have received”* (Wisdom 7.15).

The gentleness of wisdom requires a certain disposition of soul, a certain attitude of mind. It requires an openness on our part to that constant coming of God’s Word to us, *“to that which we have received”* in the witness of the Scriptures and in the life of the Church to the Incarnate Word. The Advent Word challenges the arrogant assertions of our own petty ‘wisdoms’ and the follies of our complacencies. It speaks as well to our fears and anxieties, to our anger and despair. It brings us under the tutelage of God’s word and wisdom. Then we may say that *“both we and our words are in his hand.”* Such is the gentleness of wisdom.

We come to an ending only to find that we have come to the beginning, to him who is the foundation of our lives. We find all our endings and all our beginnings in the

Father’s Son and Word. We come simply to Christ. And surely, that is the truth of our Christian life. By his Word we have gained the threshold of heaven upon which we may sing and dance, upon which we may sit and talk.

What more can we ever say than that? What can our talk be except his Word in us? Then we shall find that we *“have thoughts worthy of what [we] have received.”* The fruit of our lives must be our talk of Christ, *“for both we and our words are in his hand.”* That we can begin again is *“the gentleness of wisdom.”* It is the joy and the wonder of Advent.



Advent speaks directly to our age, it seems to me, in ways that are especially profound. I wonder whether we have *“the ears to hear”* and *“the eyes to see”* that what comes towards us is grace and hope. It comes on the wings of the Word, signaled in the Scripture lessons of the Advent season, especially in the Epistles and the Gospels. *“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,”* as Paul puts it. Cranmer would have us pray, *“grant that we may in*

such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them” for only so shall we be wise, embraced in the gentleness of wisdom, the wisdom of Christ.

The Advent in Isaiah will be the theme of the Advent programme this year on Tuesday, December 4th and Tuesday, December 18th, at the 7:00pm service of Holy Communion.

I would remind you, too, of the *Advent & Christmas Service of Lessons and Carols* with KES (Gr. 7-11) on Sunday, December 2nd at 4:30pm. The service for the Grade 12s will be held at the School Chapel at 7:00pm.

An highlight of the Advent Season will be, I think, the second of this season’s Christ Church Concerts Series with *Capella Regalis* offering a concert, *“To Bethlehem with Kings”*, on Friday, December 21st, 7:00pm at Christ Church. An outstanding Men and Boys’ Choir under the direction of Nick Halley and with Paul Halley at the organ, it should be a very special evening and a wonderful contribution to our Advent preparations for Christ’s holy birth.



Fr. David Curry