

Sermon 2010 Advent Midweek 1

Text: Isaiah 64:1-9

Theme: "Wait Till Your Father Comes Home!"

December 1, 2010

"Wait till your father comes home!" How many of you remember hearing those words when you were growing up? Perhaps some of you are still hearing these words today. Wait till your father comes home! What images do these words bring to your mind? What past adventures do these words bring to your mind?

I never heard these words because I was the good child. My oldest brother and sister caused enough trouble to cover my share and half the neighborhoods to boot, so my other brother and I never felt a need to rebel. But my boys have heard it plenty of times. Noah and Neal had both rather resolve whatever problem is going on between Danya and them without my involvement because my involvement is almost certainly going to be unpleasant for them.

We are now in the season of Advent, and at Advent, God is coming. We are waiting for our father to get home. We remember that Jesus came into human flesh at Christmas but more importantly, we remember that he is returning on Judgment Day. Very often we think only of Advent in connection to Christmas; if we think of Advent at all. Most people jump right from Halloween to Christmas and Thanksgiving has almost been absorbed into Christmas now. People tend to love Christmas and they see Advent as unnecessary.

As much as you might like Christmas, Advent is really connected more to Judgment Day. A holy God is coming, and we are sinners. Yes, in our text, Isaiah first sounded quite eager to have the Father come: "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down." But then it's almost as if he rethinks what he just prayed for. He says to this God, "Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?" Whoops. Now that I think about it, maybe I'm not so eager for Father to get home. Isaiah realizes that God has reason to come to us in terrible judgment.

Our so-called "good deeds" cannot prevent God's judgment. Isaiah knows he has to admit, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment." Our good works in God's presence are like wearing filthy rags to a black tie affair. Our good works do nothing to get us right with a holy God. Even our attempts at good deeds are sin. Our sin brings us destruction. Isaiah understands. He goes on to say, "We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

Are you enjoying Advent yet? Are you looking forward to the second coming? Wait till your Father comes home!

But thanks be to God! This is only half of the story. We can rejoice that our God is coming. God is just and must deal with sin, but the Bible declares and declares loudly: God is also our loving Father. Isaiah says:

"But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. . . . Remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people."

God is our loving father. He is the potter; we are the clay. We belong to him. We are the works of his hands. He has personally created us. We are precious to him. Advent announces the coming of our loving God in the flesh to save us.

In John 1:14 we read, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." *The Word* is a title for Jesus. The eternal Word of God became flesh, became a human being, was born among us. We call this truth of Scripture the *incarnation*. Incarnation means to become flesh. *Carne* is a Latin word for flesh or meat. When you buy a can of chili at the store, often the label will read chili con carne. That means chili peppers with meat. At Christmas we celebrate that Jesus, the eternal Word, became meat. He became a flesh-and-blood human being. He did so to become our Savior who could pay for our sin, take them all to hell and return for us when his Father sends him.

Look inside that manger. What do you see? Not just a baby. You see God in the flesh come for you!

Look upon Calvary's cross. What do you see? You see not just a victim of an unjust punishment. You see God in the flesh paying for sin for you!

Look inside that empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning. What do you see? He is not there! He has risen from the dead. He is God in the flesh, victorious over sin, victorious over death, victorious over the devil. And he did this for you!

When the end of the world and Judgment Day arrives, look! Who is coming again? Look! Who is coming in glory to take to heaven you and all who trust in him? Who is it? It is God in the flesh, the King of kings and Lord of lords coming for you.

Just wait till your Father comes home!