

Sermon 2009 Advent 3

Text: Micah 5:2-5a

Theme: "The Ancient of Days Comes"

Remember the good old days? Boy those were the days right? The other day I heard an old geezer talking to a kid and he was saying,

"When I was young, we didn't drive everywhere. We walked because we only had one car and my father drove that to work. And when I was young we didn't have Facebook and cell phones and answering machines. If you wanted to talk to someone, you had to either write a letter or walk over to their house and knock on the door! And when I was young we didn't have Wii. If we wanted to play a sport, we had to get a ball, get a friend and go to the park. And when the old geezer finally shut up, I thought the kid should have said, "Oh yeah, well when you were a kid, there was Polio! And cars that left a carbon footprint the size of Montana and people thinking it was somehow a noble protest to smoke pot and drop out of life." But the kid didn't say anything. He just wandered away into the youth room and the old geezer shrugged at Margaret and wandered back into the office marked Pastor and I wondered when my father had started channeling through me?

We all have fantasies from time to time that our days were somehow better days and they surely were better in some ways and worse in others. Every age has positive and negative things going on. But the reality is that the darkness of our world is never outweighed by any number of happy memories. Whatever is good and light is a miracle provided by God to give us the strength to get through this dark valley of death. Goodness and light are anomalies in this world in every age.

Micah prophesied to fat lazy people who thought that the good old days had arrived and that things were going to be even better than they had been in the days after the Exodus when their ancestors had been delivered from slavery in Egypt. Micah was an old geezer who kept trying to warn the people that God did not intend for us to be rich, fat and lazy but rather hungry, lean and hard-working people. He intended for us to manage all his gifts for his glory not roll around in them like pigs in the mud. He did not glorify the good old days, but he did warn his people that they were not living a life that was consistent with God's plan. Micah said,

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

And he shall be their peace. (Micah 5:2-5a)

“One shall come from of old, from ancient days.” This is not some kind of Normal Rockwell reminiscing. This is the Lord Jesus himself who comes forth for us. He came as a baby, heralded by John the Baptizer, and healed the lame, made the blind see, loosened the tongue of the mute and raised the dead. He proved to the world in that day that he was who he said he was. The one who was, who is and who is to come, comes for us! That is what we celebrate at Advent.

We talk about the good old days but he comes from before there ever was a day. He who has seen every day unfold from the beginning of time comes to us as one of us. Of course he can heal the lame and give the blind their sight. He not only comes from ancient days, he is The Ancient of Days.

Advent is a time of waiting for The Ancient of Days to come. Like we waited for Christmas when we were little children, so we wait for The Ancient of Days now. It was never a doubt in our minds that Christmas might not come this year. We knew it would come but the wait was murder. We might have had some doubt as to whether or not our behavior qualified for the best presents, but we knew we would get something on Christmas. Some of us laid awake for a long time, listening for bells and the sounds of reindeer hoofs on the roof, wondering if there was a fat man in a red suit stuffing gifts under the tree even as we lay there and being terrified that he might find us awake but the harder we tried to sleep the more it eluded us.

Likewise, you and I still wait. But too often we live as though we are a child who does not believe. Our pride prevents us from saying we were wrong. Our anger blinds us from seeing the part we have played in the hurt we received. Our arrogance gives us a false sense of security and our selfishness causes us to hoard instead of give for fear that we might have to sacrifice something for another. You and I still wait like naughty children tucked in our beds fearing that we will have coal instead of presents.

But we wait not for Christmas so much anymore; but now much more for The Ancient of Days to return and finish making everything right. This time, he won't stop with a few ill people healed and a couple dead people raised. This time he returns with all who have gone before us. This time he comes with the whole company of heaven. This time the demons of Hell are locked away from us for eternity. This time as he returns, we receive the gift for which he died. We are returned to our rightful home. This time we walk with The Ancient of Days into Paradise where our lives truly begin. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.