

ReMembering Resources

VOL 1 Part 1 Advent/Christmas Nov. 28th – Dec. 5th 2010

November 28, 2010

First Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Calendar

Church Calendar: Today is New Year's Day in the Christian calendar. We begin Year A of the lectionary cycle, with a focus on Matthew's gospel.

Communal and Cultural Calendar: In the United States and much of the Western world, the culture's economic and media engines ignore "Advent." This is now "Christmastime," a season of shopping, parties, and all sorts of decorations and other festivities. How will you help St. John's observe the call of Advent where you are?

Isaiah 2:1-5.

Out of the house of the Lord shall come wisdom and instruction, and all nations will convert their weapons of war into implements for sustaining life.

Isaiah 2:1-5

2:1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2:2 In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

2:3 Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

2:4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

2:5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Psalm 122 (UMH 845).

A psalm rejoicing in Jerusalem, a foretaste of the Jerusalem Isaiah prophesies.

122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

122:2 Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

122:3 Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together.

122:4 To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

122:5 For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

122:7 Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."

122:8 For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you."

122:9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Color: Blue or Purple

Sermon: This Day...That Day

Topic: Through God's promises that have been and are being fulfilled, God takes us from this day in which we live to that day filled with the completion of God's Will for our lives.

Reflections

The First Layer – Christian Teaching and Tradition

In this layer we focus on the Apostolic teaching of our Christian faith.

Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.

During Advent we remember that we need to prepare again for the Incarnation of God in our world – Jesus born to Mary and proclaimed by Shepherds, Kings and Angels AND for Christ Jesus returning to claim all who are in the Kingdom.

Let's put that another way:

Jesus was born in time.

As the Word (Logos), Jesus has been for all Eternity.

Jesus as child of Mary is God enfleshed – God become fully God and fully human.

Eternity has broken into time and has become subject to all the pains and joys of time.

The making-holy (Sacrificial) action of God begins with the eternal decision to break into time and claim each of us as members of the Eternal Kingdom.

Jesus came (God enfleshed) as baby Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth and Son of Man.

Jesus died (God enfleshed) challenging the injustice of Roman Empire and the corruption of the Temple Priesthood.

Jesus rose (God enfleshed) from the dead as Christ Jesus – the Anointed One.

Jesus Christ comes again and again in every moment of time since, by His Resurrection, all of time is now swallowed up in Eternity.

These fumbling words are yet another attempt to explain a mystery. That God would choose to love us at all and show

interest in any one of us is truly mysterious. That God would place God's Very Self (Jesus) at the mercy of human choice is, quite frankly, all but impossible to believe. Yet that is and has been the conviction of Christians since the earliest days of the Jesus movement which became the Church.

In the Apostles Creed we hear echoes of this theology of the Incarnation.

Discussion

Can human language or human ability to comprehend fully grasp the eternal idea of the Incarnation?

Why is it the time-honored custom of the Church to have us reflect on the Incarnation and the Second Coming of Jesus during the Advent season?

The Second Layer – Methodist Heritage

In this layer we focus on what our Methodist way of being Christian offers to us in this area.

John Wesley – Sermon # 62 “The End (Purpose) of Christ's Coming.”

1. He was manifested as the only-begotten Son of God, in glory equal with the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven before and at the foundation of the world. These "morning stars sang together," all these "sons of God shouted for joy," when they heard him pronounce, "Let there be light; and there was light;" -- when he "spread the north over the empty space," and "stretched out the heavens as a curtain." Indeed, it was the universal belief of the ancient Church, that God the Father none hath seen, nor can see; that from all eternity He hath dwelt in light unapproachable; and it is only in and by the Son of his love that he hath, at any time, revealed himself to his creatures.

4. ...It was in the fullness of time that God "brought his first-begotten into the world, made of a woman," by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. He

was afterwards manifested to the shepherds; to devout Simeon; to Anna, the Prophetess; and to "all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem."

5. When he was of due age for executing his priestly office, he was manifested to Israel; preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in every town and in every city. And for a time he was glorified by all, who acknowledged that he "spake as never man spake;" that "he spake as one having authority," with all the wisdom of God and the power of God. He was manifested by numberless "signs, and wonders, and mighty works which he did," as well as by his whole life; being the only one born of a woman "who knew no sin," who, from his birth to his death, did "all things well;" doing continually "not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him."

6. After all, "behold the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world!" This was a more glorious manifestation of himself than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he manifested to angels and men, when he "was wounded for our transgressions;" when he "bore all our sins in his own body on the tree;" when, having "by that one oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," he cried out, "It is finished; and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost!" We need but just mention those farther manifestations, -- his resurrection from the dead; his ascension into heaven, into the glory which he had before the world began; and his pouring out the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; both of which are beautifully described in those well-known words of the Psalmist: "Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and hast received gifts for men; yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among" or in "them."

7. "That the Lord God might dwell in them:" This refers to a yet farther manifestation of the Son of God; even his inward manifestation of himself. When he spoke of this to his Apostles but a little before his death, one of them immediately asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" By enabling us to believe in his name. For he is then inwardly manifested to us when we are enabled to say with confidence, "My Lord, and my God!" Then each of us can boldly say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." [Gal. 2:20] And it is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts that he effectually "destroys the works of the devil."

The Third Layer – Wigington’s Corner.

In this layer we focus on the history of St. John’s U.M.C.

Beginnings.

“On Sunday November 4th 1928 (five months and a week before our education building was completed and first used.) **Mr. Wigington had ready for distribution to the congregation a “Special Centennial Edition” of *Church Work and Sunday School News*** (a “newsey little paper” which he, Mr. Wigington, had been preparing for church and school at regular intervals for seven years by that time) **which included not only an authentic history of St. John’s but also a number of interesting facts about the church and Sunday school.** – *from “A History of St. John’s Methodist Church” by Georgia Marshall Fant*

“One hundred years ago, in the good year 1828, what is now the city of Anderson had its beginning, and, simultaneously, and to the glory of Methodism – always among the first in newly opened lands – a Methodist church, the first church of any kind in Anderson, was organized....

According to information available, official published minutes of the Methodist Conference, the old church records being lost, the first pastor was Ebenezer Leggett, and this church one of the several churches embraced in the Keowee circuit and in the Augusta district.

From court records and from the memories of the oldest inhabitants, it may be stated with certainty that the first house of worship to be built in Anderson was the Methodist church located on West Benson street about where Wallace’s blacksmith shop is now located(?) and that it was a small log structure, without windows or means of heating. If the wind blew from the east, the story goes, the congregation opened the south door for light; while if the wind or rain came from that direction, the east door was opened. Other than Whitfield

Anthony, D. H. Calhoun and Isaac Hays, named as trustees in the deed to the lot on which this little log church was built, and the preacher for that year, Thomas D. Turpin, the names of those who were interested in the erection of this building have been lost.” – *from “History of St. John’s M.E. Church, South Anderson, South Carolina” by John E. Wigington 1928*

Discussion:

172 years ago we were given the gift of our Church. Consider: How many others do we owe debts to for handing on our faith? Why is our faith so important? Are we doing our part for generations we cannot know any more than Whitfield Anthony, D. H. Calhoun or Isaac Hays could have known about any of us?

Hymns:

- 196: Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”**
- 213: Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates**
- 216: Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming**

December 5, 2010

Second Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Calendar

Christian Year: The Second Sunday of Advent introduces us to John the Baptizer every year.

Interfaith: The Jewish Festival of Lights, Hanukkah, runs from December 2-9.

"Blue Christmas" services are becoming a mainstay in many places around the United States. These services recognize the sadness and loss that many people may feel acutely at this time of the year. While some offer such a service on Longest Night (December 21), anytime during Advent could be appropriate.

Cultural: The Christmas/holiday celebrations are in full swing with school programs and concerts. Theater productions and films with Christmas themes run through the month, and shopping pressures mount. How will you help your worshiping community keep Advent while everyone else is frenzied about Christmas?

Isaiah 11:1-10.

Isaiah prophesies the coming of a righteous ruler out of the stump of Jesse.

Isaiah 11:1-10

11:1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

11:2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

11:3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

11:4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he

shall kill the wicked.

11:5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

11:6 The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

11:7 The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

11:8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

11:9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

11:10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (UMH 795).

A psalm in praise and intercession for a righteous king, such as the one foretold in Isaiah.

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

72:1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

72:2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

72:3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

72:4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

72:5 May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the

moon, throughout all generations.

72:6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

72:7 In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

72:18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

72:19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

Color: Blue or Purple

Sermon Title: Three Spirits

Topic: God gives the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might and knowledge and the fear of the Lord. These are our Spirits of Advent which will guide us closer to God during this season of anticipation.

Reflections

The First Layer – Christian Teaching and Tradition

In this layer we focus on the Apostolic teaching of our Christian faith.

Jesus of Nazareth is the “Root of Jesse”.

Imagine for a moment that you are one of the first generation to come to believe that Jesus – the handyman (carpenter) from Nazareth – is God enfleshed, God made man.

You have discovered that in Jesus you have encountered a very unique person. You have these vague ideas about how to explain Jesus. All the other members of your group (Apostles

and disciples – followers of Jesus) are struggling to put language on their experience of Jesus too. Who is He? How do we explain Him to those who never heard Him speak?

Imagine the mind-stretching work that happened!

Where do you imagine they would have found images and language to help describe Jesus? Obviously they turned to the Sacred Scriptures of their time the Scriptures we call The Old Testament.

Most of these earliest followers of Jesus were unable to read or write but they were all very familiar with the psalms and Prophets. They remembered the psalmist yearning for a ‘righteous king’. They recalled passages from Isaiah about a king who would come from the stump or root of Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. The earliest believers declared that Jesus was the righteous king that Isaiah spoke about coming from the house of Jesse. And that was just the beginning!

It was one thing to describe Jesus as a righteous king girded in faithfulness but very quickly these same followers including one who had been very recently persecuting the very first followers – one Saul/Paul of Tarsus – began speaking of Jesus not only as a righteous king but as The Righteous King. Very quickly Jesus is called Lord (Adonai) – a name reserved in Old Testament Scripture to refer only to Yahweh (God).

Discussion:

From Jesus the handyman (carpenter) to Jesus the Lord (Adonai – God)! What inspired this understanding of Jesus in the earliest Church and why?

The Second Layer – Methodist Heritage

In this layer we focus on what our Methodist way of being Christian offers to us in this area.

The General Spread of the Gospel

By John Wesley

Sermon 63

(text from the 1872 edition - Thomas Jackson, editor)

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters covers the sea.
Isaiah 11:9

1. In what a condition is the world at present! How does darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it, cover the face of the earth! From the accurate inquiry made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. Brerewood; (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form the more exact judgment) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are professed Heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ, as if he had never come into the world: Six of the remaining parts are professed Mahometans: So that only five in thirty are so much as nominally Christians!

9. "Impossible," will some men say, "yea, the greatest of all impossibilities, that we should see a Christian world; yea, a Christian nation, or city! How can these things be?" On one supposition, indeed, not only all impossibility, but all difficulty vanishes away. Only suppose the Almighty to act *irresistibly*, and the thing is done; yea, with just the same ease as when "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." But then, man would be man no longer: His inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the sun or the wind; as he would no longer be endued with liberty, -- a power of choosing, or self-determination: Consequently, he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or punishment...

11. Take one instance of this, and such an instance as you cannot easily be deceived in. You know how God wrought in *your own* soul, when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He did not take away your understanding; but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty; your power of choosing good or evil: He did not *force* you; but, being *assisted* by his grace,

you, like Mary, *chose* the better part. Just so has he *assisted* five in one house to make that happy *choice*; fifty or five hundred in one city; and many thousands in a nation; -- without depriving any of them of that liberty which is essential to a moral agent.

12. Not that I deny, that there are exempt cases, wherein

The o'erwhelming power of saving grace

does, for a time, work as irresistibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I speak of God's general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable instances; perhaps more within fifty years last past, than any one in England or in Europe. And with regard even to these exempt cases; although God does work irresistibly *for the time*, yet I do not believe there is any human soul in which God works irresistibly *at all times*. Nay, I am fully persuaded there is not. I am persuaded, there are no men living that have not many times "resisted the Holy Ghost," and made void "the counsel of God against themselves." Yea, I am persuaded every child of God has had, at some time, "life and death set before him," eternal life and eternal death; and has in himself the casting voice. So true is that well-known saying of St. Austin, (one of the noblest he ever uttered) *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." Now in the same manner as God has converted so many to himself without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world; and it is as easy to him to convert a world, as one individual soul.....

26. At that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian Church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isaiah 11:9) "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls, Salvation, and thy gates Praise." Thou shalt be encompassed on every side with salvation, and all that go through thy gates shall praise God. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." The light of the sun and moon shall be swallowed up in the light of His countenance, shining upon thee. "Thy people also shall be all righteous . . . the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the

things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 60:18, &c.; and 61:11)

It never ceases to amaze this writer how the concerns of one period in time mirror the concerns of our time. Bear with the language and, sometimes, appalling cultural biases expresses by John and you see the clear concerns we ourselves still bear. Are we not still concerned with bringing Jesus to the world? Aren't we?

The Third Layer – Wigington's Corner.

In this layer we focus on the history of St. John's U.M.C.

Did you know?

Did you know that twice during our history as a church every other church in Anderson closed to help us celebrate important moments?

From my reading, and I am open to being corrected if anyone knows better, the first of these two moments occurred on November 11th 1888 when the Sanctuary building which immediately preceeded our current Sanctuary was dedicated....

“Last Sunday added another chapter to the history of the Methodist congregation in Anderson, the occasion being the formal dedication of their new house of worship to the service of God. The day was a most beautiful one, and all nature seemed to smile upon the occasion. All of the city churches were closed and the various congregations united in the service.” - *Anderson Intelligencer* November 16th 1888

The second such occasion occurred on May 5th 1912 which was the Sunday upon which our current Sanctuary was formally opened. Our Sanctuary was nor formally dedicated

until April 22nd 1921 but we began using our existing Sanctuary on May 5th 1912....

“In the evening there were no services at any of the other churches of the city, the evening services at St. John's being in the nature of a union service of all the pastors and their congregations. An impressive part of this service came when the pastors of all the churches of Anderson rose and extended congratulations to the pastor, Rev. S. A. Donahoe and to the members of the congregation on the building of so handsome a structure for the worship of God.” - *A History of St. John's Methodist Church* by Georgia Marshall Fant page 15

Discussion:

Would such an honor be expected these days? Do we respect the gift which is every other church? Are we respected as a gift from God by every other Church in Anderson?