

Advent Is a Season of Hope

by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM

“Come, Lord Jesus,” the Advent mantra, means that all of Christian history has to live out of a kind of deliberate emptiness, a kind of chosen non-fulfillment. Perfect fullness is always to come, and we do not need to demand it now. The theological virtue of hope keeps the field of life wide open and especially open to grace and to a future created by God rather than ourselves. This is exactly what it means to be “awake,” as the Gospel urges us! We can also use other words for Advent: *aware*, *alive*, *attentive*, *alert* are all appropriate. Advent is, above all else, a call to full consciousness and also a forewarning about the high price of consciousness.

When we demand—or “hope for”—satisfaction from one another, when we demand any completion to history on our terms, when we demand that our anxiety or dissatisfaction be taken away, saying as it were, “Why weren’t you this for me? Why didn’t life do that for me?” we are refusing to say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” We are refusing to hold out for the *full picture* that is always still being given by God.

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann views hope as trust in what God has done and will do, in spite of evidence to the contrary:

Hope in gospel faith is not just a vague feeling that things will work out, for it is evident that things will not just work out. Rather, hope is the conviction, against a great deal of data, that God is tenacious and persistent in overcoming the deathliness of the world, that God intends joy and peace. Christians find compelling evidence, in the story of Jesus, that Jesus, with great persistence and great vulnerability, everywhere he went, turned the enmity of society toward a new possibility, turned the sadness of the world toward joy, introduced a new regime where the dead are raised, the lost are found, and the displaced are brought home again. [1]

“Come, Lord Jesus” is a leap into the kind of freedom and surrender that is rightly called the virtue of *hope*. Hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without full closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves. We are able to trust that Christ *will* come again, just as Christ has come into our past, into our private dilemmas, and into our suffering world. Our Christian past then becomes our Christian prologue, and “Come, Lord Jesus” is not a cry of desperation but an assured shout of cosmic hope.

[1] Walter Brueggemann, *A Gospel of Hope*, compiled by Richard Floyd (Westminster John Knox Press: 2018), 104–105.