

## Learning to Walk in the Dark

"I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting."  
-- T.S. Eliot, "East Coker"

Advent is always such a strange way to begin the liturgical year because it's always counter cultural. In this COVID-19 world, there's a pull to focus on how we can get back to where we were. We not only are waiting for Santa, but we are waiting to return to "normal." We aren't merely dreaming of a White Christmas; we are dreaming of a way of living that has largely evaporated.



However, there are simply not enough decorations or Christmas music or presents bought on the web to still the anxiety or restlessness within nor to help us believe that what we have gone through is merely a dream. No, Advent is a reorientation. We must learn to walk in the dark. We must let go of our agenda to make the world behave. We must look for new birth in unexpected places. Most of all, we must let go of our personal sense of agency and fall into the hands of the living God. When we run out of what we can do, it's time to be still and discover what God can and will do.

In this strange COVID season -- mixed with the increasing awareness of our country's racism, and the political divisions -- I do not wish to be the Grinch stealing our Christmas. However, the work of Advent is the road to rediscovering Incarnation. We must abandon our customary ways of filtering reality and learn to walk in the dark, looking for new light and pray that the Word becomes flesh in this time and in our lives.

I do not want to take away our pre-Christmas traditions, but I do want to remind us that we are not waiting for anything under the tree and not even for the end of the virus. We are waiting for the reign of God. This is when the lion and the lamb lie down together; it's when there is no more war; an end to poverty; racism evaporates and the Beloved Community is here; the common good becomes the major agenda for all.

Because we cannot make any of this happen by ourselves, we pray "your kingdom come, your will be done" over and over. God has given us a vision of God's desire for God's people. Our job is to hold onto that and move toward that vision and pray for it and believe in it -- realizing God always does the heavy lifting. The final words of the Bible are "Come, Lord Jesus" because we do not know how to make the world new.

This is what we do know. God is God is God. Let us remember God's dream for God's world and align ourselves to it. Let us do what we can in this moment to prepare for it. Most of all let us put all our hope in it by remembering God's promises and praying "Come, Lord Jesus."