

First Sunday of Advent C

December 1, 2024

Once upon a time

So starts so many tales, so many stories filled with excitement and surprise and joy and wonder and yes, even danger. Once upon a time Every time we hear those words we know that something special is about to happen, the telling of an incredible story, one which was formed and grew from the imagination of a creative person somewhere, in some time and place.

Once upon a time

Today, in a sense, we start a new chapter in a story even more incredible and beautiful and meaningful than we could ever think of or imagine. The story of our incredible God alive and well and at work in the heart and in the life of every person, a God alive in you and in me. And believe me, in this case, truth really is stranger than fiction.

You know the elements of the story well, a Garden and a serpent, an ark and a flood, a Pharaoh and some plagues, a journey in the desert and a covenant with a people; prophets and kings and judges and wars and exile. And then and then . . . a baby, and not just any baby, but God himself. God choosing to be born into his very own creation, as one of us living, preaching, teaching, and yes, even suffering and dying and thankfully rising.

Wow! Now THAT'S a story! But what might be most amazing is that it is not the WHOLE story. No, the story continues, and each of us gets to co-author that story in a sense, with our loving God, each of us gets to help determine the path this narrative will take, first and foremost in our own lives, and by extension for the whole world.

And today, the first Sunday of the new Church or Liturgical Year C, the First Sunday of Advent, we put “pen to paper” once again and continue the story, continue OUR story, start a new and hopefully, a faithful chapter. And that means we get to take the story wherever we want it to go, wherever we think it should go, wherever the world needs it to go.

Once upon a time . . .

Yet, one part of the story has already been determined, already been chosen, the last page, so-to-speak. My dear friends, the world is heading somewhere. God is drawing all of his creation back to himself. All of history has God as its final end. That we don’t get to change even if for some reason we would want to. It simply is a deep and profound reality. And God wants every one of us to share in it.

**“And then they will see the Son of Man
coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”**

St. Luke the Evangelist will accompany us on this journey during the coming year. It’s now his turn. He will be our moderator, our guide, showing us a particular side of the diamond that is the Lord Jesus. And more importantly, God will be accompanying us too, walking the journey with us, that is, alongside us yet also leading us, out in front beckoning us to follow yet also dwelling within us. What a God we have!

Once upon a time . . .

What story will we be telling this year? Where is our own personal narrative going? Are we crafting a story that has the same ending God desires for each one of us? Or are we trying to write our story without God’s help, without his guidance and wisdom? Does he even get a say? Or do we think that we should call all the shots?

It’s safe to say that God could MAKE us do whatever he wants, whenever he wants. God is God and unfortunately you and me are not. And yet,

because of his great love for us, he chooses not to do that. Rather he gives us freedom, he gives us choices, he gives us the ability to steer our own individual stories toward him or away from him. In other words, he never forces us, but rather invites us, and encourages us, and even shows us the way.

That's what Advent is all about, a time to prepare ourselves for God to break into our hearts and lives once again, starting us on a new chapter, a more meaningful chapter, a more faithful chapter. God didn't (and doesn't) want to do everything by himself. Nor did he want to leave us to do everything by ourselves. Rather, he became one of us to show us how to live, how to walk our journey with us, how to stand with us and within us in all things, and yes, even to show the extent of his great love to the point of death.

That's the God we have! And so, this Advent, as we continue our journey of faith, and as we continue our story, let's be sure that our lives are co-authored through the choices we make and with the guidance and wisdom and mercy and love of a tiny baby who wants nothing more than for us to hold him close and never let him go.

Once upon a time . . .

May the choices we make during this new Church Year help us, and all we come in contact with, head toward the ending God so desires And they lived happily ever after.

Have a blessed and a fruitful Advent, everybody!