

Waiting and Watching: A Word from the Minister

“In Advent we expectantly wait for the One who has already come.”

(Liturgical Year: The Worship of God)

Since the early life of the Church, Christians have expressed the twofold horizon of Advent by speaking the word ‘*maranatha*.’ This Aramaic word, which the Apostle Paul uses as he concludes 1 Corinthians, pulls us toward the two directions of Advent: past fulfillment and future promise. *Maranatha* means both “Come, our Lord!” and “Our Lord has come.”

Advent, like Lent, is a season of waiting and watching, as the people of God prepare for God’s decisive movement among us. Since “our Lord has come” indeed, Advent stands as a reflective stretch of the Christian year during which we may marvel in anticipation of the Nativity of Our Lord, when the eternal Word came among us as the fragile child of Mary. Yet, at the same time, still we watch expectantly for the fulfillment of God’s reign in Christ, praying together “Come, our Lord!”

Liturgical Year: The Worship of God, a resource produced by the Presbyterian Church (USA), speaks insightfully of the twofold joy and hope of Advent. This liturgical season involves “far more than preparing to celebrate the first coming of Christ, the incarnate Word.” Advent does, of course, enable us to await the celebration of our Lord’s Nativity, but it remains at the same time “a season of hope, during which we anticipate the future coming of Christ to judge, and to establish His rule over all things. In the light of Christ’s first coming, we have hope for fulfillment of the realm of God in the future.”

The seasons of the liturgical year afford the people of God opportunities to grow in faith, to seek the guidance of the Spirit, and to become evermore conformed to the image of Christ. It is delightful that, while advertising implores us to adopt the anxious pace of a consumerist frenzy, the season of Advent offers us instead a time of reflection and gratitude, as the Church rejoices in the knowledge that the most important Gift of all has come to us already, from the hand of our most gracious God, even Jesus Christ our Lord. *Maranatha!* Amen.