

Come, Lord Jesus! Do I dare  
 Cry: Lord Jesus, quickly come!  
 Flash the lightning in the air,  
 Crash the thunder on my home!  
 Should I speak this awful prayer?  
 Come. Lord Jesus, help me dare.

The poetry is from Madeline L'Engle in her book, *The Irrational Season*, and with these words we step across into the season of Advent — the waiting season, the looking-forward-to season, the season of holy anticipation.

But as we begin this “adventing,” this adventure, we would do well to stop for a minute to ask ourselves what it is we await and anticipate. We might be tempted to say, “Well, of course we know what it is,” but there are times when I’m not so sure.

There are times when the world seems pretty confused. Are we waiting for Santa Claus to arrive by helicopter or hot air balloon or surfboard at the nearby mall or Crystal Pier? Are we looking forward to the gathering of relatives and friends around family hearths and dinner tables? Are we anticipating the challenge of finding just the right gift for everyone on the shopping list? Are we waiting for the extra burst of energy that will propel us through the next four weeks? Are we anticipating the first Christ-Mass on the dark, still night of December 24th? Are we looking forward to getting back to normal when the holiday madness has finally ended?

If we’re honest, each of us would probably say that we could answer yes to at least some of those questions. And it’s important to be honest and to admit that those kinds of things are a big part of what goes on at this time of year.

But there has to be something else. There has to be something more. If there’s not, then Advent is nothing more than a dizzying bacchanalia, or it’s a cruel reminder of the pain and loneliness of living, or it’s just another season of the year — and there has to be something more.

During most of the month of November temperatures have been in the eighties, but now

it’s turned colder, and our furnace at home came on for the first time the other morning. I’m still not used to how early in the afternoon it’s pitch black outside, and in some parts of the country farms and meadowlands are already being buried under a blanket of snow that will relax and restore the soil. All around us there are signs that something is happening — dramatic changes and subtle changes that are trying to get our attention, and to let us know that something is going on, changes that are trying to nudge us or jolt us out of ordinary time and into another time, a different time and a different way of operating, a way that reminds us of what and who we really await and anticipate.

And the person we await, who is also the event, is Jesus Christ, God in flesh. But it’s not just Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem. We need to remember that this is a season with two faces.

Two thousand years ago a baby was born in Bethlehem, and the angels sang, “Good will on earth, and peace.” Advent looks forward to the annual celebration of that birth, and to the remembrance of that proclamation, but Advent is also a time for remembering that it wasn’t long before the proclamation of “Good will on earth, and peace” was drowned out by shouts of, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

So we don’t just remember the birth of that baby two thousand years ago. We also anticipate and look forward to the time when Christ will come again in glory.

Right now in our personal lives and in our corporate lives there are some areas where there is no real good will, and where there is no real peace. That means when the second coming of Jesus takes place, there are going to have to be some big changes, and Advent is a time of year for asking ourselves what we could do personally and corporately that might make it possible for the angels to sing their song again.

We can’t hope for much success if we take on the responsibility for changing the whole world, but we can make some changes in our own lives. Where are the areas in my life where there is good will or peace, and where are the other areas? Am I willing

to really look at those areas, and to try to find ways of making things better than they are right now?

Those are some questions for Advent, and even though they may sound fairly harmless, we should all be forewarned that the honest asking of those questions involves some soul-searching and hard work, and maybe more than a little pain. If we're able to do it, the answers that come from that hard work may change our lives. They may change how we think about ourselves. They may change how we conduct ourselves in relationships. They may change how we go about our work. They may change how we order our family life. They may change how we approach the Holy One.

There will be lots of changes if we truly engage ourselves in the search for good will and peace — and as I said last week, we all know that most human beings don't rush out to embrace change. Most of us will endure almost anything to maintain the illusion of a familiar status quo.

But if Advent is anything, it is a season for change. It's a season for shaking the foundations. It's a season for proclaiming with the living and the changing of our lives that our Lord will come.

Maranatha.

Whatever else we celebrate this year, whatever else we await or anticipate, may we somehow find the strength and the courage to proclaim by the living and the changing of our lives that our Lord has come, and our Lord will come.

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