

*“This Advent: O Come!”*

*“O Come...Don't Be Led Astray!  
Lose Yourself To The Mystery!”*

Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:2-11  
December 8, 2020 *Third Week of  
Advent*

O come...on, o come by...here, O come  
over.

O Come when you are ready... O  
Come to think of it...

O come on down - the price is right!

O come...to me!

O come away with me...to the  
manger.

Deeply, quietly we...want to...come. To  
belong.  
To come to understand. Come lovingly.  
Be love.

Long to have agency in our own lives.  
For light to *come with us* into the  
mangers,  
the unknowns of our lives.  
Yes! Oh do we long to come!

*But...we're often afraid to come...  
as the angels warn us not to be!*

*We're afraid...to make ourselves  
vulnerable...  
to face the mangers of risky  
possibility in our lives.*

Uncertain how to be and what to  
do...so...

we ask holiness...to come to  
us...first or instead!  
Feeling vulnerable, or helpless, or in  
over our heads,  
fear and trepidation sometimes seeming  
to block the way...  
we want Holiness to come to us!

Come to us because so often we don't  
know how...

to come to...terms with our own  
lives.

**And, indeed, this is just what is  
about to happen...Holiness is  
coming to us!**

**We call it Christmas!**

O Come...Christmas! It comes. O  
Come!

Christ is about to come as baby Jesus to  
show us the way  
to live from a heart of compassion...to  
show compassion  
to ourselves and others...how to live as  
enlightened beings.

Christ is about to break through as baby  
Jesus.

Break through our darkness and fear.

Your life? You don't have to get  
over it!

You can't! Rather, live through it!

You can't escape your life...but you can live anew through it!

Holiness is about to put on a human face.

This baby Jesus comes to help *you*...hold all of life together in significance, in ways that...

make the lion to lay down with the lamb...

your family to gather around the dinner table...

give you the courage to leave that job,

to stay in that relationship,

to find yourself free and at peace.

In Jesus is to be revealed the redemptive pattern that we call the life and death of things, the grace of God's Do-Overs!

(Adapted from Richard Rohr's *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations*, pp. 387-388)

The Universal pattern for living unconditional love is being born again...

in just a few weeks...so...come...

O Come...Away With Me To The Manger.  
Let it be so!

Prompting:

Back then, right now...Jesus was asking them...  
is asking you this morning,

What do expect to see in the wilderness of this world  
of ours? What do you expect to find?

What are you looking at?

What *are* you looking for here, this morning?

A reed shaken by the wind? ...another sad news story, or maybe a “good luck with that” story?

Are you expecting to just keep retelling yourself the same old stories over and over again? Woe is me!

Misery does love company. ;)

Are you expecting to see someone in soft robes, a new ruler? ...someone who would fix this world of ours or fix your life for you?

Make you feel good about yourself  
without asking anything of you.

Really, what then did you come out expecting to see?

Is what you expect to see the same as what Jesus  
wants you to see...today?

Here's the thing...the Advent thing of it...

What Jesus wants you to know and expect is this:

Ours is not a problem-solving Christ,  
not a denominational or cultural Christ,  
not a Christ domesticated by the Church!

Nor taken over by politics!

Our Christ is unconditional compassion for all.

And, our Christ does ask something of us.

Christ in Jesus asks us to embody what we know to be true, what we say we value...  
asks us to embody justice...

to visibly live in oneness, seamlessly with our faith...

and for us to invite everyone to come along with us!

To live like He lived!

This is what Jesus expects and He shows us the way.

Holiness invites us to journey on the holy way  
and not let ourselves be shaken in the wind,  
led astray by those in soft robes...of either party!

Expects that we live with compassion....by taking that Holy, patient pause before  
acting so we have time  
to find compassion within ourselves....first.  
This is the way.

Christ in Jesus patterns a way to live that thrives  
even in wilderness times of life!

Beyond words, He embodies this...and makes it possible for us to do this as well...stay  
on the high, holy way.

When others go low, you go high! Go Holy!

This is what is meant when He says,

“I am the WAY, the truth, the light.”  
Live like this! All People!

Christ holds it all together, models for us how we can hold all parts of our life stories  
together...even  
those disasters times and those which overwhelm.

He shows us how to make new meaning of things  
by connecting all things together!

Invites us to put our stories alongside the master story  
and glean wisdom from it!

Christ reveals the redemptive pattern of the many “life and death” moments in our  
lives...

connecting those times that are **life stopping**  
with those times that are **life giving**.

Jesus reveals new life does come from seemingly dead places when we travel life the holy way.

Jesus wants us to hold the meaning and value of our lives **outside of** our life's circumstances!

Make new meaning by telling our stories  
from a new perspective, and so experience a new, perhaps unexpected, chapter of life!

You get a do-over...a real Christmas!  
You get to see a new way to connect the dots and make meaning of things! Yes, it takes  
energy, effort.  
But it's worth it...it changes everything!

You just prayed:

What I want and need for myself,  
I begin to experience as I reach out to others who are also in need...  
perhaps greater need than mine. And it won't be easy.  
I must have resolve and not be shaken by the wind.

Divine One, you confound my expectations. You share in my weakness and pain. You  
offer rest and restlessness when I need it most. You stay with me in my frailty and my  
strength...  
oh that I may know the difference between the two!

This is a new way. A Holy way of being.

To see how living out your compassion affects: YOU!

Offered is a new, unexpected life  
beyond what you could have thought up,  
conceived of on your own.  
It's the alternative to living in the thought world  
that often manipulates us.

...Holiness, a universal, divine reordering of life... that's what we call: Christmas!

We can make new meaning from the things that happen to us and the choices we  
make!

And,  
it's not that we want more mountain top experiences...  
as much as we want the desert times to bloom!

And...  
you can bloom flowers in the desert of your story...  
but not by yourself, doing life alone!

Even John the Baptist couldn't connect the dots to make meaning of things all by himself.

Even he began to second guess himself and doubt himself and his own experience when isolated...  
in prison as today's Bible Wisdom Teaching tells us.

And, he...was the best the world had to offer  
till the time Christ came in Jesus.

Then came and Now we have...the world has Jesus  
and Jesus has...YOU!

Thanks to Jesus, you now can see how to make new meaning from your life...  
to live the part of your life that's  
in a foreboding Advent  
into the new insights of Christmas and  
into an unstoppable, resurrected Easter of a life!

With our help...yes, you can!  
With our support, with the community's invitation to accountability with each other,  
you can!

The Unseen, Sacredly Silent, Provocative,  
Beyond Words God of Ours,  
the Firstborn of All Creation  
invites you this season  
to Come...to come close...to come to the manger  
with us!

So...Jesus asks us again:

What then did you come out to see?

Really...Why are you here this morning?

What do you expect in being here?

What do you expect, this Advent, given the Master story's wisdom?

This week alone, as I have lived within this community, learning from and challenged by all of you and leaned into Advent, I have come to expect...

~When I step back...if I only will...someone else will step forward.

~When I lose my voice there are people here, who will find their voice while they wait for me to find mine again...they will step up!

~This week, I learned and so can expect...that when I stop over-functioning,  
let someone in,  
not only be the giver of kindnesses but  
receiver of kindness...

they're willing to get up off the couch of their life...they so long to get up off the couch  
of their life!

...and bring to me...

what it is I most need...because they care and can.

~This week I learned...

When I need to laugh...

cause like John I've done the best I can even if my best doesn't quite take me all the way...just laugh!

Admit it to myself and chuckle about it.

At least just text an LOL to someone.

I learned...

~When you reach out, others reach in...

~When things seem to be going well,  
it is easy to take that for granted and when they're not, you "get it"

there is *no such thing* as well-being and happier endings outside of body-mind-spirit  
wholeness.

No happiness if you don't connect all the dots to make new Christmas meaning of  
things!

**Wellness is at least as much spiritual as it is physical!**

These are for me, some of the learnings  
just this week, leading to...and keeping me on  
that Holy Way...teaching me to be alive!

What have you learned to expect this week?  
*...beyond words?*

Let's take a moment here...

Together, we can expect this:

When we're surrounded by those who believe in us and believe like us...we tend to  
believe...*more!*

**Being in community is powerful!**

Yet, so often, just when we need more...  
when hard times come,  
and we find ourselves locked out,  
locked up (as John did), locked away...

and begin to lose clarity...  
and like John, to question...  
to doubt our belief and ourselves...

we just we need community most...  
we often stop coming...  
just when we need to come most!

You know this is true, too.

So...especially in those times, remember to Come...  
O Come!

You often hear me say: Not all gifts come gift wrapped. And so I/we often need help to see, need each other to see the truest gift in any given moment!

To connect the dots.

And...isn't it interesting too?

The Universe will present to us the same unwrapped gifts, the same lessons to be learned  
over and over again until  
we take advantage of learning them,  
connect the dots and live a new story.

When you've been foolish enough to think you  
can do it on your own, can make "it" happen...  
and it's still not happening...you can expect...

God touches you with living waters and sprouts up delight in desert times and *puts*  
*you* on the Holy Way ....if you'll...come! See and...O Come!

You can redeem that which seems bad or negative  
or life-stopping and use it for good.

Even when YOU'VE been tipped out of that  
tippe-canoe, God's got cha'!

God's re-deem-ing you.  
We're here for you!

God is believing in you...  
thinking about you...seeing you and offering you  
a newly storied life of compassion.

Through Isaiah we come to know God's heart and the heart of the story God wishes us  
to embody!

Our Advent stories reveal a Holy Way.

You cannot go astray when you walk on it, live it.

Cannot get lost in the noise and shouting of life.

So Come...along the way...the Holy Way...  
to the manger...with us.

May we go forth from this time in fearless freedom,  
incarnating and radiating the love of God

in each of the moments of each of our lives...even the ones that don't come gift  
wrapped!

Live compassion through the daily  
retelling of our truest story to ourselves...  
...and turning it into a new story!

O Come and allow the past a new future.  
It will amaze you!

O Come!

O Come Away to The Manger...with us!