

TO A DANCING DAY
ROMANS 13:11-14
DECEMBER 7, 1986

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Advent is a necessary corrective in our busy lives. The church year is well designed, beginning not with Christmas, but with Advent. Let us affirm the wisdom of the ancients and observe Advent. During Advent we prepare, wait and anticipate. An important part of any celebration is the preparation period, and it is fun to prepare, decorate, light advent candles, purchase gifts, wrap them, and anticipate (shake, smell, guess). Because we know what Christmas is like, we know how to prepare. The future event of Christmas gives content to the period of preparation.

In a larger sense, Advent is also a time to reflect and consider anew what it is we are ultimately anticipating so that our daily lives take on meaning. In other words, our life on this earth is a time of preparation, waiting and anticipation. As Christians, we are a forward-looking people. We do not observe Advent by concentrating on Thanksgiving which is now past for this year. Nor do we observe Advent by concentrating on the present. We observe Advent by preparing, waiting and anticipating Christmas. Likewise, as Christians, we do not live our lives by concentrating on the past, the good-old-days, or some glorious event that we would like repeated. Nor do we live our lives totally in the present as if this is all there is. We live our lives preparing, waiting and anticipating the future. We are a forward-looking people. We are future oriented.

Advent is an opportunity for us not only to prepare to celebrate the first Advent--the birth of Jesus--but Advent is also designed as a season to reflect, prepare, wait and anticipate God's future--the kingdom of God. We are the Easter people. We live as new people, rejoicing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and anticipating the final, glorious day of God's triumph. Because of the resurrection, we live in a completely new mode of existence. We live in the expectancy of the completion of God's revelation in Jesus.

What kind of kingdom will it be? What is the content, the hope of the future for which we prepare, wait and anticipate? Hans Kung, in his book, *On Being a Christian*, describes the kingdom hope magnificently, (pg. 215)

It will be a kingdom where, in accordance with Jesus' prayer, God's name is truly hallowed, God's will is done on earth, we will have everything in abundance, all sin will be forgiven and all evil overcome.

It will be a kingdom where, in accordance with Jesus' promises, the poor, the hungry, those who weep and those who are downtrodden will finally come into their own; where pain, suffering and death will have an end.

It will be a kingdom that cannot be described, but only made known in metaphors: as the new covenant, the seed springing up, the ripe harvest, the great banquet, the royal feast.

It will therefore be a kingdom...of absolute righteousness, of unsurpassable freedom, of dauntless love, of universal reconciliation, of everlasting peace.

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It will be a kingdom that cannot adequately be described with words. Music, partying, dancing, and sharing the sacrament of fellowship (which we call Communion) can convey the joy and hope. The sacrament of Holy Communion has a futuristic element. We not only remember the last supper, but we anticipate feasting together in the kingdom of God. The liturgy states, "until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet." The kingdom of God will be a dancing day. Tomorrow is my dancing day. As our Advent theme song portrays, Jesus calls you and me--his true love--to his dance. What a day that will be!

Therefore, as Christmas gives content to Advent preparations, so the kingdom of God gives content to our daily lives. In accordance with God's will, those who believe live today as if the kingdom of God has come in its fullest. Insofar as possible, we are given the joy, the privilege, to live now in the confidence that the dancing day will come. Live according to Jesus' teachings. Love one another as God loves you. Plan and work diligently for a world without war, a world without hunger and disease, a world where everyone has shelter, a world of justice for everyone. We prepare and work for such a world because we know it is God's will, and we are confident that God will triumph, and that such a world is coming.

We live in the present with a foot in the future. The future gives meaning to the present. Interpret the present according to the future. Let the future shape the present. The cold, dark, rainy days of winter are bearable because we have confidence in the coming of spring and summer. Likewise, we can endure the illnesses, setbacks, problems, disappointments of the present because we have confidence in the coming of the kingdom of God. The future gives a perspective from which to view the present.

Live in the future now. Don't dwell on the past and try to have it repeated. Don't waste your time longing for days and events that are gone, never to be repeated. Likewise, don't deny the past and pretend it never happened. The attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II did occur. They cannot be denied; but take the past, forgive and learn from the mistakes. Rejoice in the memories. Likewise, don't deny the present. Don't try to escape. Take the present, embrace your life, set it to music and dance.

We can dance because we know the best days are yet ahead. Tomorrow shall be my dancing day. Get the foot tapping now. Move your body in joyful, anticipated rhythm. Let the music, let the beat, fill your head. Keep the vision of the kingdom of God crystal clear. The kingdom of God is coming! Prepare, wait and anticipate.

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