

## **ADVENT NARRATIVE IS**

Advent is an affirmation of the and of the not yet. There is a sense of hopefulness – a sense of the world pointing in a specific direction, toward an unexpected thing that is deeply irrational. Advent moments are those where we saw abundant possibilities for the future without having the whole story in front of us.

Advent is about willingly engaged in generative and regenerative work. Advent is a fresh start and a season of revisioning what could happen. And Advent is a willingness to look into the future and be willing to embrace the irrational as the way of love. In the Advent narrative, God uses normal people in very unexpected, irrational ways.

The Advent narrative lays out how one, normal human beings were visited by God; 2 how they were changed by that experience, and then 3, how they ran out into the world to proclaim an altogether love.

The end of the story is a reckless narrative – a narrative that places ordinary, unexpected, simple, invisible people at the forefront, placing them smack dab in the middle of God's great acts in the world. The Advent story is a story of choosing an altogether love that welcomes the whole self and leads into the unknown.

## **COMMENTS ABOUT ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER LOVE**

P 63 Goodness is stronger than evil, and love is stronger than hate. Love is the thing that conquers evil—love cannot be confined., it cannot be destroyed, it cannot be crushed. Love will enter into any space that is considered ‘no thing.’ It fills up that space, and transforms darkness into light

63. Almost love welcomes only the parts of people that are desirable or palatable, or easy to handle. An altogether love is one that welcome the whole self and honors that we ae made up of many parts. It is cross-cultural and countercultural; it can seem irrational to love this way—or even to be loved in this way.

64. Unable or unwilling to risk being loved altogether, We strive for an almost love because we think that’s better than nothing. Perhaps we don’t really believe in the truth that instead of being confined and oppressed into an almost, we can step into an altogether version of ourselves as Christians And as the church. Perhaps we don’t believe the truth that love, real love, is waiting for us.

A non Christian or an almost Christian is a loving person, caring for creation, exerting self control, and even engaging in the practice of religion. This person is not bad or evil but exhibits a lack of depth. The almost Christian is characterized by outward actions, thoughts, and feelings that do not penetrate all the way to the heart.

A person can be good, kind, moral, and even love rightly without having much depth – but the person is then just a surface level person of faith. Someone who demonstrates love through a misplaced motivation- such as for profit, admiration, or influence isn’t necessarily evil; they’re just superficial, exhibiting a life of almost love.

The Church does not own love. Humanity does not own love. Love is too big, too big inclusive, to rule breaking, too reckless to be confined. Every time we try to confine where love belongs or where love should show up, it will pop up in the most unexpected places.

The act of loving – the love of God, love of self, love of neighbor, love of the world – is an engaged and deliberate choice in a person’s life.

## **PROCESS OF GOD'S ADVENT WORK IN WORLD FOR OUR TRANSFORMATION**

In many situations, privacy invites true honesty. Wesley sought for the Christian to be honest, authentic, and loving. In the Advent narrative, God's love encounters flawed human beings and moves them from imperfection – an almost Christian – to people who are fully used, known, and surrounded with an altogether love.

It takes time to build relationships and to trust another person. But when we take the time to be in genuine relationship, we eventually can stop presenting an almost self and share our all together self. Privacy and intimacy allow us to move from an almost to an altogether love.

Our call of the Advent season is to help ourselves in one another move from an almost love – a desire to control, shape, and possess a Christmas experience – into an altogether love – a reflection and experience of the mystery, danger, and abundant, unexpected life that comes to us in Christ.

In the Advent season, your call is to help yourself, your family, and your church community move from effect secular almost love – be a good person, be good people together, do good together at Christmas time by an all together love God speaks from a place of altogether love. God says, come and be altogether loved. Come and hear my story that asks normal people into an altogether love where all parts of you were used and loved and valued. There's a risk in bringing your whole self to me, but the reward is immeasurable.