

A Homily by the Rev. Dr. Renée Tembeckjian  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
30 November 2025  
*The First Sunday of Advent*  
Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

“Community Theater”

Growing up in New York, I was fortunate to have had access to theater. To this day, I love that moment when the house lights come down, the orchestra tunes up, the room grows dark, and a good story is about to unfold. I am always eager for it to begin, but I have also grown a bit more patient over the years and now try to savor that bit of waiting...

...which brings me into a mindset of Advent...when the light does, in fact, come down, as the late autumn skies bring shorter days. That is not the only kind of darkness in the world, of course – it also comes in suffering, violence, prejudice, and in the corruption of persons, institutions, public standards, and the creation itself. It seems that an ever growing number of people, across generational, political, geographical, and categorical lines, currently report a common experience – not one of eagerness and excitement, but one of dread, concerned about the story unfolding before us in the theater of human life.

Advent scriptures do not gloss over or deny the reality of such dis-ease in this world. In fact, they often detail the trials and travails that we create by our choices – things done and left undone. And yet, they also declare, over and over again, that the power of darkness *will* not ultimately prevail, Whatever we believe about that or however we hope to experience it, we are invited to trust in the Advent of Light that is always unfolding.

As in any great story, no matter role we play, we are called to be ready, we are instructed to prepare. There is certainly no shortage of advice for us there, especially in communities like ours, and more especially in this season:

Decorate the house, buy presents, find the tree, bake cookies, set the table, and brace for the time with family. Then there’s the annual family photo – where the kids look good *and* appear to get along, despite their behavior just seconds before the click of the camera.

All of this can be wonderful – cherished traditions and tending to things...so long as we remember that these are not the *only* things. Advice on preparation can easily slip into a pressure to perform. We risk becoming so focused on setting the stage, so to speak, that we lose sight of the story we are waiting *for*.

So, Advent invites a *different* kind of preparation – a call to deeper spiritual awareness by way of an intentional, honest reflection on our own character and motivations.

It is *not* an easy preparation to undertake.

It can be challenging to examine all that we carry within us, especially those things which may be painful or embarrassing to acknowledge to ourselves – the unvoiced worries, frustrations, or sorrows we bear, the anger, disappointments, or jealousies which tug at us, the illness or struggle which grieves us, or the bad break we feel we did not deserve.

Advent calls us to look inside and lay aside anything which makes our lives a less than fitting home for a holy infant...

...because as much as we love those iconic seasonal words, *peace on earth, good will toward all*, we may find that our desires, priorities, and choices sorely test our Christian integrity. We may be tempted to feign sleep, for example, closing our eyes to the plight and condition of others, as if to say, "Sorry...there is no room for you at *my* inn."

But Advent calls us to recognize and prepare for the divine movement always in development, always ready to open in the theatre of this world:

*You know what time it is; it is now the moment to awake from sleep;  
to lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

The armor of light. That is the costume St. Paul urges us to wear – the clothing of compassion, kindness, humility, and patience.

As far as props –where we might advocate for a sword or spear, the Prophet Isaiah envisions plowshares and pruning hooks.

Regarding the script, it is David who gets the credit for naming the acts – *Peace Within Our Walls* and *Quietness Within Our Towers*.

The title of the story, the cover of the playbill, so to speak, reads, *The Way of Love*.

All that remains, then, is how to recruit the actors. The answer? Open auditions. All are welcome to try out, and, in the end, every person is needed. Not one soul is dismissed.

And so, study the script, examine your motivation, and reflect on your choices. Prepare yourself for the work ahead... and then step onto the world stage and do it.

Today is First Advent: Sleepers, wake. Embrace the waiting. Trust the great story that is already unfolding and accept the role you are uniquely and wonderfully suited to play in that divine production.

And *this* great story has an intriguing twist, it packs something of a surprise ending:

We can wait for the Light of Love to come, yes, but if we will *be* the Light of Love...

...then it is already here.

Amen.