

News for December 2022

Dear Friends in Christ:

Advent is here. Advent the season arrived on November 27. There are four Sundays in the season of Advent. Their Latin names are taken from the Psalm at the beginning of the service called the Introit:

The first is *Ad Te Levave*. Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

The second is *Populus Sion*: People of Zion (Isaiah). At some point Lutheran substituted Daughter of Zion (Zechariah)

The third is *Gaudete*: Rejoice! This is the Sunday we light the rose colored candle.

The fourth is *Rorate coeli*: Drop down ye heavens

We will incorporate introits into the beginning of the services this year.

The word Advent is based on the Latin word for come and be present. It focuses on the Return and Presence of Jesus.

The ancient people of Israel under bondage to foreign overlords believed that God would literally and physical come to them and deliver them and bring his justice and peace. We now know that that did not happen.

Or did it?

The people of Jesus' day believed that God would send his Messiah to deliver them and bring his justice and peace. Every time a would-be Messiah came along, the Romans killed him. We know now that God's Messiah did not come and deliver.

Or did he?

Christ's church today around the world is ridiculed, ignored, sidelined, beleaguered, threatened, imprisoned, and killed. We know now that God's justice and peace will never come to the church and to the world.

Or will it?

The season of Advent is not for the faint of heart. In this season we hope against the evidence and hope against the false hopes that are dangled in front of us. We hope on the basis of God's promises. We hope on the basis of Jesus who died and is now alive. We hope on the basis of what we have seen and what we have heard from other people of faith. We hope that God's kingdom will come and his will will be done. We hope for the return of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. We hope that the power of sin and selfishness and murder and mayhem will be broken and that those who are left in the world will accept Jesus' new way of being human. We hope that justice will roll down like waters and righteousness an everflowing stream. We hope that they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. We hope that the shepherd of Israel will give heed and return. We hope in the return of the Son of God to pull us forward into the fulfillment of our lost

humanity: the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. The hope of the season of Advent is captured in the Aramaic prayer of the first Christians: *Maranatha*: Our Lord, Come.

Yours in Christ,

John Shepherd McKenzie