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Midweek Advent I
5 December 2012
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Christ's Advent in the Flesh

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Advent invites us to slow down.
No, it demands that we stop.
It's a rude interruption.
No one outside of the normal rhythm of the Church even knows about it.
All that is known is Christmas.

The world is a busy place.
Shopping, buying, decorating, baking, and all the people.
It's stressful.
At times, overwhelming.

But not Advent.
Advent, you could say, is boring.
It's slow.
It's calm.
It's a way of putting the brakes on the rush toward Christmas.

Advent calls us out of the sprint from Thanksgiving to Christmas,
and into the slow walk along the Jordan with John the Baptist and all the prophets who
came before preaching repentance.
Advent is a time of waiting, of repenting, and of refocusing on who we are
and who this God is that will lay His head in the straw of the manger.

And if we don't know who that God is, there's little reason to trust Him with our life.

During these midweek services we'll ask what sort of God this is who comes to us.
We'll see that He comes in 3 specifically different ways with 1 constant purpose.
Each week we'll focus on a different coming of God:
in the flesh,
in glory,
and in grace.

One is past, one future, one present.

Today we'll look at how God has come to us in the past, in the flesh.

Each of our readings today focuses our attention on the reality, the earthiness of His coming.

And all you need, really, is the first line from each reading.
For instance, the text from Genesis says:
"And the Lord appeared..." (Gen 18:1).

Really? He appeared? He could be seen and touched and talked to?

Yes, and more than that, Abraham and Sarah even shared a meal with Him.
This God wanted to be known in the flesh around a meal.

In our Epistle today we learn to know God only in Christ.
Paul says that “[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).
That is to say, you look at Jesus and you see God.
To behold Jesus is to behold God Himself in flesh and blood;
for, as Paul says,
“in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19).

There’s no such thing as God in general.
Anyone that believes in God but not in Jesus doesn’t believe in God.
Anyone that prays to God apart from Christ doesn’t pray to God.
It’s hard, but that’s who God is—
He’s the sort of God that locates Himself in the flesh and blood of Jesus.

That’s why the Gospels are so profound when they say so simply:
“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.” (Mt 1:18)

Really? God was born?
God, who made man, was born of man?
God, who nourishes and provides for and cares for and saves man is now held by man?

Can He really be that small?
Can He be so weak?

Have you held an infant?
Do you know how frail they are?
Could God really let Himself be so powerless and defenseless as an infant?

Yes.
“The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel.” (Mt 1:23)

But why?
Why did God come in the flesh?
No other religion would ever claim such a weakness.

Zeus dwelled on Mount Olympia—He wasn’t ever born of man.
Muhammad heard the revelation of Allah through an angel, but never saw him or touched him or heard his voice or made his bed.
Hindu gods come in many shapes and sizes, but none can be located in what we call “History.”

History is that boring subject in school that talked about dates and times, places and events.
And it’s in that boringness that our God thought best to dwell.

He wanted to be like us.

And better yet, He wanted to be located where we could see, feel, smell, taste, and hear Him.

He wanted to put Himself where He could be found, and received, and known.
He wanted to be known for His weakness.

And to do that He came in the flesh.
He came in time.
He came within our own study of history.

He was hungry, so Abraham and Sarah fed Him.
He was cold, so Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes.
He was in love,
 so He gave Himself up to be crucified,
 “thus making peace by the blood of the cross.” (Col 1:20)

This God who wants to be known for His flesh and blood reality,
 the same God who comes to you.

He doesn't come abstractly, in a way that you think you know He's here;
 but He comes in reality, in real time and in real place in real flesh and real blood.

His being located on a timeline sets Him apart from all other gods.
His laying in the manger and on a cross and in a tomb are part of the story of no other god.

So why'd He do it?

Well that's simple: for you.

Because you also are in time and place, in history.
You also have flesh and blood, weakness and hunger.
But more than that, because you're not the way He first created you to be.
And that needs fixing.
And that sort of fix can only be done with flesh and blood, with death and sacrifice.

So our God thought best to come to you in the flesh.
And not to you alone, but to all the saints of Old:
 to Abraham and Sarah,
 to Peter, James, John, and Paul,
 and to more than 500 who saw His resurrected *flesh* (1 Cor 15:6).

That's how He wants to be known.
That's how He comes.
And that's Advent—at least, part 1.

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