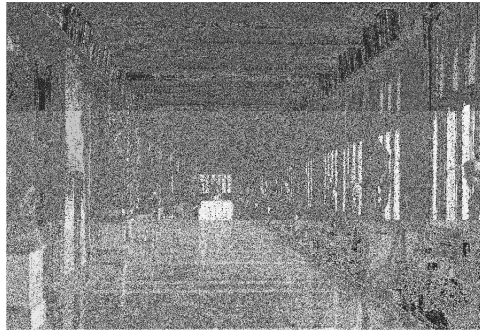


ADESTE FIDELES

-- BE PRESENT, FAITHFUL ONES



THE LORD HAS SET ASIDE THE FAITHFUL FOR HIMSELF – PSALM 4

**“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those that mind don’t matter,
and those that matter don’t mind.” – Dr. Seuss**

Scripture:

Luke 16:10-15

¹⁰Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’

¹⁴The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵So he said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.’



LOOKING DOWN THE GREAT HALL

It's hard to stop looking at the picture on the front cover of our bulletin. Artistically this photograph of the great hallway in the Uffizi Gallery of Florence is a long colonnade of statues that carries the eye through the hallway to a focal point at the far end. Light from the windows intensifies the play of light and shadows upon the statues. On the ceiling are scenes of people looking down upon the statues.

To the left is a life-sized, beautiful marble maiden wrapped in fine linen robes, a model of womanly beauty for all generations. To the right is a man whose coiled body holds a discus and he is preparing to throw it. The statues are busts of philosophers, religious leaders, political officials, and authors. The light and resultant shadows

transform white marble, into dramatic three-dimensional living portraits of a sampling of great people. Some of them commemorate a great event, or celebrate the person and the office he/she held.

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE GREAT HALL



The location is as important as its contents. The great hall leads from the Uffizi across a covered walkway that crosses the Arno River by way of the Ponte Vecchio (Old Bridge,) the oldest bridge in all Italy. In the Renaissance when the Uffizi were the offices of the magistrates, before they were the galleries of the museum, faithfulness was what life was all about; it was the reason to struggle, to sacrifice and to be brave.

You are from a line of faithful witnesses. Think about it.

We visit with the statues. We touch the garments, we study the eyes, and we touch the hands, and rub the feet. Just come together for a moment – Michelangelo, DaVinci, a king, a philosopher, a scientist, a theologian - equal in both time and death and eternal life.

O come, all ye faithful.

THE LORD HAS SET ASIDE THE FAITHFUL FOR HIMSELF

The Psalms say, “The Lord has set aside the faithful for Himself.” Let's celebrate the faithful that we know. Let's not waste time with trash talk about the unfaithful, and let's not talk smack about the people in power. In this place, this hallway, even in this church, there are the faithful to whom the angels have called out, and who have set their ego aside to respond affirmatively in the name of faith. The Lord has set aside these faithful for Himself.

DR. SEUSS

Here's a simple Dr. Seuss saying: “Be who you are and say what you feel, because those that mind don't matter, and those that matter don't mind.”

Saying, “what you feel” is not about saying uncomplimentary things about someone else as if you were in some kind of political campaign. What a person does or doesn't do has nothing to do with you. Saying how you feel is about the prayers of your heart that might be for self-preservation, daily bread, vocation, for courage, healing and service. Let's work on being faithful rather than mocking people whom we don't think are as faithful as we are.

We know that those who really matter don't mind who we are -- good grief why would that matter to anyone else?

And those who do mind, why give them that power? The shriekers should be worried about developing who they are.

ADESTE FIDELES

Our music today from Susan Boyle is “*Adeste Fideles*,” all four verses. The title means “be present, faithful ones.” We translate that “*O Come, All ye Faithful*.”

Just as the Magi, the shepherds and even the angels, we adore him. Christmas is not for sale, Christmas is nothing in particular, it is only everything faithful working toward peace.

"O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL"

“O Come, all ye faithful,” performed by Susan Boyle, was played. (Note: she sings only verses one and three.)

OTHER VERSES

There are many verses in different languages that we could add, but the most common additional verses that Protestants sing are verse two and verse four.

Verse two: Highest, Most Holy, Light of Life
Eternal birth of a virgin, a mortal he comes. Son of the Father now in flesh appearing...

Verse four: Yea, Lord, we greet these, born this
happy morning. Jesus, to thee be all glory given!
Word of the father, now in flesh appearing! ...

Like last week, verse four is theologically the most important. "The word made flesh" is the Christmas miracle. It is the miracle of all time.

In the universe, we are not alone. Something from God connects with something from yourself.

We are left with the astonishment, awe and adoration that is the refrain of this carol. That's how to sing this hymn.

The congregation sang verses two and four from words that were printed in the bulletin.

Oh come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh come, ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him born the King of Angels:
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Highest, Most Holy, Light of Light Eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given! Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing!
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Oh come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

ADESTE, SOCII, NESINE CONSENSU VESTRO CONSILIIUM CAPIATUR

Here is another phrase from Latin. It reminds us why *Adeste Fideles* is so important. **Adeste, socii, nesine consensu vestro consilium capiatur.** Translation: Be present, friends/associates/partners, so that the plan/debate/counsel is not made without your consent/agreement /consensus.

To me that says, "Don't miss it."

Don't miss what?

Don't miss the really important things in life. All of the really important things are spiritual things.

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL IS A WAKE UP CALL

A divorce, a new baby, a firing, a terrorist attack, or a near-death experience tend to hit us like a ton of bricks and are not easily forgotten. Maybe we were asleep. They wake us up. What is it that we have been asleep to? Priorities of the spirit. We have been spending too much time at the office, too little time with our kids; we have gotten too focused upon superficialities, or have been neglecting our health.

O come, all ye faithful. If you are in a slumber, here is your wake up call.

WAKE UP AND CONNECT TO YOUR OWN MORTALITY

Steve Jobs is a famous advocate of connecting to your own mortality. In his commencement speech at Stanford University, he said:

"Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important thing I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life, because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important."

Come, all ye faithful, now is the time to be faithful. Do the things that are important to you, and express the idea of you. Connect to your mortality.

WAKE UP AND WRITE A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Stephen R. Covey's advice in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is to write a personal mission statement. In short, a personal mission statement is an individual statement of who you are, what you are about and what you value. The process of writing such a statement helps to clarify your innermost thoughts and feelings, and once finished is something you can turn to for guidance.

Come, all ye faithful -- what is your mission, what is the real you, underneath everything you do?

WAKE UP AND HAVE A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION WITH AN OLDER PERSON

A great way then to acquire the wisdom that comes with age is to seek out an older person, and have a meaningful conversation with them. Maybe the shoe is on the other foot; maybe you are the one that needs to talk with a younger person. Ask about their life, what they have learned.

O come, all ye faithful, share the faith that brought you safe thus far with someone who can benefit from what you are and what you have attained.

WAKE UP AND MEDITATE

Meditation is a great way to relax both your mind and body. Such a state is ideal for gaining a better understanding of who you are and what you value.

O come, all ye faithful; spend a few moments in control of your own mind and thoughts, and seek clarity, calm, and blissful concentration.

WAKE UP AND VOLUNTEER

It is easy in life to become consumed with your own sense of self-importance. A very effective way to step back and see life in a greater context is to volunteer. Help those with less than yourself and you will realize just how fortunate you really are. There are opportunities all around us. O come, all ye faithful, volunteer!

BE PRESENT FOR YOUR OWN LIFE

O come, all ye faithful, be present for your own life, so that you are included in the important discussions. Welcome yourself to the great hallway of the faithful.

- Connect with your life and death.
- Connect with your mission.
- Connect with those that are older. If you are older, connect with those who are younger.
- Connect with yourself.
- Connect with those who are less fortunate.

"O come, all ye faithful!" The Lord of the Ages calls out to us at Christmas.



**Dr. John H. Cushman
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
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