

## WATCH, WAIT, AND WONDER TOGETHER



*Scripture:*

**Psalms 25:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. <sup>2</sup>O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. <sup>3</sup>Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

<sup>4</sup>Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. <sup>5</sup>Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

<sup>6</sup>Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

<sup>7</sup>Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

<sup>8</sup>Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. <sup>9</sup>He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. <sup>10</sup>All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

**Jeremiah 33:14-16**

<sup>14</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## **WATCH, WAIT AND WONDER TOGETHER**

Advent is about watching, waiting and wondering together, all to re-discover Advent once again.

If we are to re-discover Advent we must re-discover God and the promises God made that we celebrate this season every year.

Today we will look at how God shines a light that you may not be able to clearly see or feel until you are in the darkness. And the second discovery will answer the question you are probably also wondering about: In the context of an evolutionary cosmos, I wonder what Christ's purpose is for breaking forth into our world as a human being?

### **JEREMIAH**

Let's start by considering what Jeremiah is talking about in this passage. The prophet, Jeremiah was in prison at this time for his unpopular prophecies. Earlier in chapter 33 he said God would reveal great and hidden things. Verses 2-3 read: "Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed and established it – the Lord is his name. Call to me and I will answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

This promise somewhat connects to the sermon of last Sunday when we talked about the miraculous events that happened starting from the Big Bang to create a planet that enables the habitation of humans. Jeremiah seems to be giving us hints that our God answers us when we call and reveals knowledge that was previously hidden and unknown.

### **GOD'S PARTICLE**

Many scientists who are also theologians believe that there is a divine nature to the universe and that God is revealing more and more knowledge about the hidden workings of creation over time. Some of the scientists

who call the Higgs-Boson, God's particle, for instance, reflect that God was in the beginning of time and exists even in the tiniest particle of creation.

Looking more closely in this passage for today, Jeremiah in Chapter 33 is predicting the arrival of the branch of David which the Christian community connects to the birth of Jesus. Jesus Christ was of the line of David, a descendant. And his purpose according to this passage is to bring justice and righteousness to the land.

Such a hopeful prophesy from a great prophet who was serving a second imprisonment for telling prophecies contrary to what the King wanted him to say.

At this low point in his life, you might assume that Jeremiah would feel abandoned by God rather than feel inspired to prophesy a hopeful image of the future with God fulfilling a major promise to both Israel and Judah. Yet, as we talked about being thankful for dark matter and dark energy last week, often it is in the darkness we can see the light more clearly when it pierces the darkness.

**Many of the most inspirational writings have come from people who experienced the presence of God in a very dark time.**

### ***DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL***

Gerald May wrote a commentary about Saint John of the Cross's book: *Dark Night of the Soul*. John of the Cross, who died in 1591, was a reformer of the Carmelite Order in the Roman Catholic Church. He is known for his inspired writings on the growth of the soul. John of the Cross's famous book entitled *Dark Night of the Soul* was about a time when he felt hopelessly separated from God. The Catholic Church had found him

guilty of insubordination and imprisoned him.

**Yet after surviving a very dark time in his life John said, "The dark night is God's best gift to you, intended for your liberation. That period of time liberates you from your preconceptions about God that get in the way of knowing the true God who is present in your suffering as well as in your joys."**

Coincidentally, as Gerald May was writing his book about John of the Cross, May had to undergo a series of cancer treatments that damaged his heart so badly he needed a heart transplant. Yet, despite his severe illness and dark nights of doubt and dread, and suffering, May felt the darkness brought him not only closer to God but also closer to his family. Gerald May said he learned there was always an abiding presence of God with him that he could turn his attention toward to feel it anywhere.

Jeremiah's promise is a promise of abiding presence. The branch of David brings forth a special being who will execute justice and righteousness. Not just inspire it or pray for it, but an advocate who will make justice and righteousness real. It takes a presence for this to become reality. God will be made present to us in human flesh to accomplish this promise fully. And his name will be called, Emanuel, God with us.

## **RELIGION AND SCIENCE**

This leads us to the "wonder" part of the sermon. In the context of an evolutionary cosmos, I wonder what Christ's role or purpose is for breaking forth into our world as a human being?

Dr. Ian Barbour has some answers to this question in his book: *Religion and Science*. He says, "In Christ we see the character of

God's purposes for human life, the fulfillment of human nature. Barbour believes that the Christian account of humanity would be incomplete without the story of Christ. But he says our task is to understand how this story can be viewed in an evolutionary cosmos and in a religiously diverse world.

Barbour believes that Christians experience what he calls "a release from self-centeredness," and we lose our fear of death when we get to know Jesus and his way. As a scientist and a theologian, Barbour greatly admires Jesus for being perfectly obedient to God so that his life could reveal God's purposes for us. He was also impressed with how Jesus identified himself with God and did not obstruct or distort God's will, and how he was inspired and empowered by God to speak and act.

Barbour goes on to say that "God in Spirit was present in the life of Christ. And although God formed creatures through a long evolutionary process, Christ was a focal point of God's activity and self-revelation to the world. Jesus Christ is key to understanding the creative and saving work of God."

So why is Christ relevant to us today when we have other things to distract us and pacify us? Dr. Barbour believes that it is through Christ that redemption and reconciliation happens in our lives. If we think of sin as estrangement from God, and from ourselves and other people, then reconciliation takes place when repentance and forgiveness overcomes guilt because we are accepted by God's love despite our inadequacies. He is the Prince of Peace who gives us a real sense of God's grace and mercy.

## **GRACE AND REDEMPTION**

Teilhard de Chardin added to these thoughts about the purpose of Christ coming to the world when he said that grace is a creative force in all life and redemption is a

continuation of creation on a new level. In Christ we see the divine purpose to unite all reality and bring it in union with God.

Long ago, when Jesus Christ was born, there was a light that shone in the darkness, and the news spread as people told one another about it. Then they remembered something God had said long before. They recalled how the prophet Jeremiah, many years ago, had said that God promised to send a Messiah, a Savior, to be with us and to show us how to live in God's way. They had been waiting for it to happen for a long time. Some of them probably said, "Aha," when they realized that Jesus was God's way of keeping the promise that a branch of David would bring justice and righteousness.

### **LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD**

In an old Calvin and Hobbes comic strip, Calvin speaks to Hobbes and says, "*Live for the moment* is my motto. You never know how long you got." Calvin then explains, "You could step into the road tomorrow and wham, you get hit by a cement truck! Then you'd be sorry you put off your pleasures. That's what I say, *live for the moment*."

And then he asks Hobbes, "What's your motto?"

Hobbes replies, "My motto is 'Look down the road.'"

Advent is about looking down the road, and realizing anew the promise God has made that God is with us in the form of Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, and in our hearts, minds, and souls when we turn our attention towards God.

So let's do that this Advent. Let's re-discover Advent by rediscovering who Jesus was and why we should still follow his path down the road today.

The following video was shown to the congregation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcravEG2ATE>

**Benediction: The prophet Isaiah said, Arise, shine, your light has come! So lift up your eyes and look around. May you see and be a radiant light for God and for others who need to see a light in their darkness. And may your heart rejoice at the abundance of love poured upon you through God's gift of Jesus.**

**Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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