

Mission Central Meyer Minute

Advent is a time of preparation for what? I think most people will say, "Preparation for Jesus' coming at Bethlehem." That answer is not wrong, how could we be saved if the Son of God had not come into our flesh to redeem us? That said, thinking of Advent primarily as preparation for Christmas shows how much our commercial culture has influenced even us church people. These days all the media is filled with Christmas scenes, music, and good wishes. Retailers are spending big bucks on advertisements as they use Christmas to make their yearly goals. The result is shrinking Advent, shrunk to simply the birth of baby Jesus.

How helpful is that when you have put away Christmas decorations and are going through challenging times? When the work and worries of the day are staring you in the face, wouldn't a greater sense of God's presence help you more than just the memory of the manger? When you are going through times of suffering, maybe even to the point of despair, don't you need more than a memory of the manger, as essential, I'll say it again, as Jesus' incarnation is for our salvation? And when tomorrow and tomorrow stretch out before you, how great will it be when tedium is transformed into *Te Deum Laudamus*, Latin meaning "We praise You, O God"?

Bethlehem was Jesus' first advent. He's been there; done that. Jesus' second advent is the one that should really be on our hearts and minds these weeks. His second advent is when he comes in judgment and glory. Eternal judgment upon all people, us included, but for us who know Jesus as our only Savior, the second advent is when He will take us body and soul to Himself in heaven. "By grace alone through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). These December days Mission Central and the missionaries we support will certainly tell people about the birth of the Son of God, but they'll do more. They'll tell people that Jesus still makes advents today through His forgiving and life-bestowing word. And missionaries will always be pointing to the second advent. For the sake of His mission, for the sake of our own souls, let's not forget Jesus' promise as we keep Advent. "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Are some of our fellow church members lacking zeal for following Jesus every day in every way? Lacking zeal for the life of their congregation? Perhaps the reason is letting Advent become only preparation for December 25th. There's oh so much more! "Soon and very soon we are going to see the King!"