

Here we are. The season is among us. It's the most wonderful time of the year...but not because of the "parties for hosting, marshmallows for toasting, and caroling out in the snow." It's wonderful because it's the season that proclaims the comings of Christ. During Advent, we prepare to celebrate once again his birth, his continuous coming in Word and Spirit, and his final return.

"The good news of Advent is not simply that Christ is coming, but that his coming means we have hope, despite all that is falling apart in our lives, our communities, and the world around us."¹ In this passage, "Jesus challenges us, as he did his original hearers in the Jerusalem temple, to look up, pay attention, and be ready"² for him.

During this season of Advent, the sermon series, *Prepare the Way*, focuses on preparing the way for the Lord to come, in our hearts, in our lives, and in this world. We prepare ourselves to receive Christ when he comes. We prepare the world, by doing kingdom work, to prepare for Christ's coming.

When Jesus comes, it will be unmistakable, as this scripture passage tells us. In his own words, Jesus says to look at the signs around us for his presence and live in hopeful anticipation of his return. Yes, the natural elements will react to the glory of God, but so will we. Some may react in fear, yet Christ reminds us to look at the fig tree. New leaves promise hope, that spring is coming after a long winter, that there is new life coming, despite all the heaviness and chaos of this world. So, we prepare and await in hopeful expectation of the new

thing God promises to do through the coming Savior.

Jesus calls us to stand up and recognize that it is He that is coming. When we see Jesus coming on a cloud, we "stand up and raise our hands" (v.28). I love how the *Message* translation puts it: "Stand tall with our heads high. Help is on the way!" (v. 28). Stand tall from all that weighs us down and be uplifted through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And, we need this reminder. Life can be so heavy at times that it can physically pull us down and inward, almost shrinking to fetal position, literally or metaphorically. A very important part of my selfcare is getting a massage once a month. I can literally feel my shoulders buckle from stress, and I need someone to help me physically pull my shoulders back. When I leave, I can feel myself, sitting taller as I'm driving away. When we find ourselves in fetal position, Jesus reminds us that we have hope and help in him, that we can stand tall with our heads held high.

In our difficult times, we often resist the help. We tip toe around our relationship with God, and we're hesitant to wrestle with challenges, particularly if those challenges are with God. I was listening to a podcast³ on Biblical Leadership this week. It was talking about how it's crucial for leaders to have **chutzpah**. In Jewish tradition, chutzpah is having boldness for the sake of justice and community -- especially having boldness with God.

Moses had chutzpah from the very beginning. He rejected his call five times. He questioned God's intent; he wrestled with God's will; he expressed his anger to

¹ *Feasting on the Word*, kindle edition, loc 957.

² Loc 940.

³ Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, "Episode 23: Biblical Leadership," Lewis Center for Church

Leadership, 2018.

<https://www.churchleadership.com/podcast/episode-23-biblical-leadership-featuring-denise-dombkowski-hopkins/?id=li20181128#prettyPhoto>

God when things did not seem right or fair for the Israelites. God met him each time with reassurance and equipped him with what he needed, to be the leader God called him to be. There were signs all around him that revealed God's presence and reassurance.

Moses has chutzpah. He gets in God's face, is willing to take God on and meet God face to face. And, God encourages Moses to do that. God encourages us to do that. God wants us to wrestle and work things out with him because that means we have an honest relationship with God. God doesn't call us to be puppets. God calls us to be partners in bringing about the kingdom of God. God wants us to have chutzpah because that quality is crucial in preparing the way for the Lord's coming in this world.

Jesus wants us to have chutzpah!

Stand up to the adversaries in this world for the sake of justice and community, even if, at times, that adversary is God. **Stand before** the Son of Man when he comes with heads held high. **Stand in** the presence of God. Because we have hope and help, stand in the presence, soak it up, and be ready for Christ's coming.

During Advent, we prepare our hearts for the coming Christ, so we don't get bogged down in the chaos of this world, so we don't get sucked into the busyness of the season. Often, we focus on the political division, our wounds, the hurtful words and actions of others, or we just check out. Remember, we do not live of this world. We live in the hopeful anticipation that Christ is coming to end the pain and suffering. Whether that is through the first time Christ comes to us, the continuous coming through Word and Spirit, or the final return.

Don't go through this season of Advent missing that this tiny baby that we

await holds the full power and glory of God. We stand up and raise our hands in worship. We stand before the Son of Man, welcoming his return. We stand in the presence of God, receiving our full redemption.

Jesus is coming! Let us "Prepare the Way" and ready ourselves. Let us ready the world. Amen.