

"Are We There Yet? Almost!"

First Sunday of Advent - December 2, 2018 - Luke 21:25-36

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those of you who had traveled with kids remember this conversation. "How long it takes to be there?" As a parent, you will give your best and accurate answer but after a few minutes, the question for the entire trip will be "Are we there yet? Depending on which answer will be the best for the trip either it will be "Not yet" or "Almost " I usually prefer the positive one.

This morning we will be playing this parent and kids conversation. During my sermon I will ask you like the kids " are we there yet?" your response will be " Almost" please don't say "not yet." Then you ask me " are we there yet?" I will respond "Almost" let us practice now. Well, I know you now are wondering what this has to do with my sermon anyway?

I think it has to do with the season we just started today. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a journey. A journey we count four weeks until we arrive to the destination. The word Advent is from the Latin *Advenio* "to come to," it is a reference to the coming of Christ.

When we think of Advent, we usually focus on the first coming of Christ, which is his birth at Christmas. However, Advent has a deeper meaning than what it brings us once a year. If Advent is about the coming Christ, Christ comes to our lives through the visible and spoken Word every Sunday. Advent is also about the second coming of Christ to this world to judge the living and dead. In other words, Advent is about the past present and future coming of Christ. So, if we want to think seriously Christ comes to our lives every moment. That means we are living Advent every day.

However, the Bible is so clear about the distinct coming of Christ. Our gospel reading is about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the end of this world. Advent is a journey of waiting for the coming of Christ. As you all know, all kinds of journey require some level of patience. There is a lot of waiting on any journey. Some kinds of travels are means of preparing you for the next long travel.

The season of Advent is a journey of preparation for the long journey with the one whom we are waiting to come, Christ. Advent is the beginning of a journey to meet Christ and continue to follow him. *Are we there yet? Almost!* You know I didn't ask about my sermon. The sermon is not there yet! Well, if Advent is a journey to prepare us how shall we prepare to meet the one who is coming to our lives?

I think it is the right question because the culture we live in has no time for the season to finish its own cycle. Before we even think that Advent has begun, already we are singing or listening Christmas carols.

We live in a culture that has no time to wait. Everything is about now and right now. Although no longer the western church teaches about fasting during Advent, in the eastern churches like the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Advent is a fasting season. Since Advent is one of the great festivals, it is always preceded by 40 days of fasting and prayer.

Advent is not a Christmas shopping season. Don't get me wrong I am not saying we don't need to shop but we need to make sure that mainly it is the time of

preparing and waiting. If we experience the waiting, our joy will be real when we meet our Lord. ***Are we there yet? Almost!***

I want to highlight a few points in our gospel reading. The first is about the importance of signs. During this waiting journey, God does not leave us without a sign. As we read in the gospel before coming of Christ there will be all kinds of signs. You all know that for any journey following sign is very important. The fact that we know we have arrived at our destination is when we see that important sign. Sometimes on the same journey, we may see a similar sign but that does not mean we have arrived at our destination.

When we moved from DC, we drove about 1200 miles and crossed about seven states before we arrived in KS. During that journey, one thing we learned was how in the United States, city and town names are highly duplicated. If you want to go to Springfield, Cleveland, Jackson, Washington or even Arlington to name just a few duplicated city and town names, you make sure you know the state very well.

Signs are important for any journey. Jesus said, *"So also when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near."*

Are we there yet? Almost. Brothers and sisters, perhaps to live in the Advent season and waiting for the Christ to be born could be easy because we all know that has happened two thousand years ago. Our challenge is live the present and the future aspect of Advent where we wait for our redemption. For people who are suffering from all kinds of cause, this waiting journey is the most difficult one to hold on. They would love to see their redemption soon.

Yesterday December 1st was World AIDS day. On this day people worldwide will have the opportunity to unite in the fight against HIV AIDS, show their support for people living with HIV and commemorate people who have died with HIV AIDS. In Africa millions, have died because of AIDS. As a result millions of children are orphans. People who are living with the virus have been waiting and are waiting for treatments or redemptions. I can hear them crying, *"are we there yet?"* who would answer them *"Almost?"*

Perhaps most of us are also on a journey where we are asking this question too. Our gospel has the good news *"Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near."* Our Redemption is near. It sounds like *"almost there."*

Are we there yet? Almost! Amen.

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