

The season of Advent is upon us. It's the season on the church's liturgical calendar when we anticipate the miracle of the birth of Christ. And we are told, in our "Joy to the World" Christmas carol: "Let every heart prepare him room." And we prepare while looking forward to Christ's Second Coming.

So, with Advent, we begin a new church year with the promise of our Lord's coming. Advent is a time of celebration as well as anticipation. We await the Lord's coming with the excitement of a child on Christmas Eve night.

But the joy we experience – the anticipation that we feel – comes not just from time spent with family, not just with the opening of the presents, or even not just from the glow of the candles as we sing carols. The true joy of Advent comes from a baby's return. And the coming of the babe of Bethlehem, for all its miraculous grace, is really just a hint. It's a hint of the Second Advent. That's when this same Jesus, now Risen Lord and Savior, will return and claim the world that is his!

So, Advent is actually a chance for us to look forward. It's a chance to see the world – not for what it is – but for what it can be. Despite the stress, challenges, and trouble around us, we people of God can see God at work in unlikely places. And that's because we know our Redeemer lives, is coming again, and his kingdom will have no end.

And we look forward when we expand our generosity. So much of the joy we feel during Advent/Christmas comes from giving. If our giving list includes the church...if it includes the less fortunate..., then we are looking forward, and we are being witnesses to God's future.

And we should not forget to use the Advent season to take stock of our spiritual pantry. We must ask ourselves if our spiritual pantry is sufficiently stocked with all the necessary items that will enable us, as Christ's followers, to make a difference in our church, our families and in our communities this season. So, we must keep it stocked with regular prayer, bible study, generosity, and worship attendance.

Christ is coming again. And that is great cause for anticipation and celebration during the preparation season of Advent.

May God's richest blessings be upon us in this Advent season. And may we stay spiritually focused, looking forward with hope and anticipation...and may we continue proclaiming and believing that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again.

Your brother in Christ,

*The Rev. Canon Bruce A. Jackson*

