Advent: Remembering Faith, Love, and Justice

Amos 5:24; 1 John 4:7-8

What does Advent mean to the Black community? What does Advent mean to those who are suffering? What does Advent mean to Israel and the Palestinians? What does Advent say to those who are struggling to stay alive today and tomorrow? What does Advent mean to the millions of people suffering the inhumanity and hatred of humanity gone mad?

Advent tells the world that God is with us. It tells of the Savior who is present to help in our most desperate moments. Hope stands as a balm that helps those who suffer get through their suffering. Hope helps those who have lost everything to hold on amid the heartache and fear of their futures. Their hope sometimes blows like a tattered flag in the wind, but it continues to blow. Advent reminds us that with Jesus, there is always hope. This is the kind of hope only the faithful can embrace. Because the faithful believe in the things they cannot see. The faithful hold on to that which has come into manifestation. **Paul says in Romans 4:17, "God whom you have believed, who gives life to the dead** *(this means God gives life to those things we have lost hope in. God gives life to that we have given up on. God Gives hope to those things the world says are impossible (Pastor Gool))***, calls things which are not, as though they are."** Hope believes, Hope trusts, even when it remains unseen.

Advent tells us we have a savior who will see us through our troubled times. Advent is a reminder that with faith and hope, there is no loss in Christ. Advent serves as a reminder that God "Emmanuel" is always with you. Advent is a time that we remember the promises of God amid the troubles of the world and realize that trouble does not have the last word. In these uncertain times, it is easy to let fear and anxiety take control. It is important that amid the world's turmoil, we trust in God, and know God is in control. When the foundations of life have given way, God, "Emmanuel" speaks these words to us, **"Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, For I am your God: I will strengthen you, Yea, I will help you; Yea, I will uphold you with My right hand of My righteousness." Isa. 41:10** God is saying do not fear, even in the worst of circumstances; do not allow fear and doubt to hold you hostage. Do not allow the terror of the moment to defeat you. I am your God; I will give you the strength that you need to get through whatever you are going through. I will hold you up when you no longer have the strength to stand, and I will be your rock when earth begins to crumble beneath you, I will be there to help you stand with the right hand of My righteousness.

The Psalmist says, "The young lions do go lacking and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want for any good thing." This text tells us that the strongest and the most powerful can experience loss and deprivation. But those who seek God shall not want for any good thing. Advent should remind the Black community, like Israel, we too have a history of strength and resilience. Like Israel, we too have been an example for people around the world of how to

persevere and prosper in the periods of historic tragedy. We should remember all we have come through as people. God has brought us through years of injustice, segregation and Jim Crow. Advent reminds us that God is still moving and acting on our behalf.

Advent carries a message of reconciliation and peace for Israel and the Palestinians. Advent should remind everyone that Jesus came as the peacemaker. The coming of Jesus breaks down the barriers of hostility and division. Jesus challenges both sides to become more than they have been and work toward a lasting peace—a peace where both Israel and Palestinians can live in security and dignity.

Advent offers a vision of peace for those who choose to embrace it. It is a hard peace. It is a peace where the love and forgiveness of Jesus lie at the center. It is not an easy peace. But it is the only kind of peace that Jesus offers.

Even amidst the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the words of the Savior bring peace and comfort to those who are hurting. They remind us that there is hope beyond the chaos. Advent tells us God's justice will ultimately prevail. The message of Advent speaks to the resilience of the human spirit and encourages the faithful to hold onto faith even in the face of the most discouraging and adverse circumstances.

Advent offers comfort to those who are struggling and reminds them that they are not alone in their pain. Advent tells us that Jesus knows our pain. Jesus understands what it means to be misused and abused. Jesus understands what it means to be a lamb led to the slaughter. In these tumultuous times, celebrating Advent requires a commitment to love, to peace, and promoting justice. It involves standing up against oppression and advocating for those who cannot speak for themselves. Advent calls us to be agents of change, working towards a world where love triumphs over hate and where all people can live in harmony. We cannot celebrate Advent without understanding that Jesus came as a savior, as a servant, as the lamb of God. Jesus came to give Himself so others might be saved. Advent is about giving ourselves, in the service of God, to save the lost in every aspect of what it might mean to be lost to Jesus Christ. Let us thank God for Advent and all it reminds us to do and become.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool