



Devotional Thoughts :: Our Wintry Advent

Our Wintry Advent - posted by roadsign (), on: 2014/11/20 14:29

â€œCome, Lord Jesus.â€ Revelation 22:20

If you are among those who regularly endure the clutch of winterâ€™s deepfreeze than you will know what itâ€™s like to crave for spring. As each day passes you look forward to spring with intensified longing. You may even come to a point when you cannot handle another day of icy misery. You simply must see a burst of refreshing new life. This is the essence of Advent. Itâ€™s an anticipation of something you know will come â€ and must come.

Advent is a tradition observed before Christmas in many churches. It prepares worshippers for the advent, or coming of Christâ€™s birth. I got thinking: Perhaps winterâ€™s miseries can help us grasp the essence of Advent more easily than the warm delight of candles and carols. Letâ€™s consider this.

Christ came to forgive and free us from sinâ€™s icy grip. Winterâ€™s miseries easily depict sinâ€™s ghastly blast, such as cold-heartedness which inflicts untold sorrows to its victims. We know the icy edge of bitter words, which tempts us to recoil behind layers of self protection â€ much like donning a heavy winter coat. Chilly outdoor air can feel as inhospitable as a loveless community. In essence, itâ€™s a climate of unforgiving-ness rooted in the human heart, working as a toxin which erodes relationships, damages health, and depletes the energy for human potential.

Deep down we long desperately to break free from this frigid grip on humanity. We long to run freely in the warm breeze. Yet winter clings on. Where is God! In our impatience we try to fix the disruptive effects of human brokenness. And so we clatter away with our chisels, our endless noise and groans, as if chipping away at ice â€ but with little effect.

Thatâ€™s not how the Creator turns winter into spring. He does not send angels to break up the ice or strip away the snow. He simply breathes mild warmth into the frozen air. The ice melts; the snow dissolves; the rivers flow again. The earth awakens, and life spontaneously bursts forth in response to His warm breath. The Creator is working, breathing quietly. It is an irresistible power at work. We cannot create this power. We can only wait and watch for it.

In like manner, God frees humanity from the wintry grip of sin. We wait for it. We watch for evidence of forgiveness, Godâ€™s supreme gift of salvation. We know we must see it: hatred replaced by love, conflict by peace, fear by faith. This is our Advent longing.

In truth, Christ has already come, and we anticipate His second advent when sin and death is wiped away. Yet, He is indeed present in our Wintry Advent - this season before His return. How? By breathing His Life into the hearts of fallen people â€ and quietly transforming them from the inside out.

Let us learn to sense Godâ€™s quiet breathing, lest our hearts become frosted over with doubt. But we cannot sense it if our minds are noisily preoccupied with anxious thoughts and busy strategies. We must learn to be silent. Only when we are still can we hear His breath and sense His irresistible power at work.

I share an example: a married couple, friends for 40 years. As church servants, they have endured many frostbites - church hurts, you could say. These hard experiences could have stalled this couple in the icy effects of bitterness. But instead, they listened to the quiet breath of God within their own hearts. As He had forgiven them, so they forgave their offenders. Iâ€™ve been quietly watching the outcomes over the years. This couple has been free to live forgivingly among fallen people. Their energy has been free to practice lavish, gracious hospitality. And countless, including myself, have experienced the warmth.

Prayer: Lord, work in us so that we may learn to recognize Your quiet, warm breathing in and around us - even as we fervently long for Christâ€™s final advent. â€œCome Lord Jesus.â€