A couple of weeks ago, we experienced a blast of winter (a sign of what is to come) with mother nature dumping about 6” of snow on the ground, followed by a temperature plunge all the way down to 13 degrees overnight I believe, this completely caught everyone off-guard, including many weather forecasters and the sanitation workers. The city nearly came to a stand-still with hundreds of thousands of commuters being stranded on the roadways, on the trains, or at the airports. Some even spent more than 8 hours on a commute that normally takes about an hour or so.

Many wondered if mother nature was playing a trick on us or was that attributed to the global climate change. Many of us were confused and wondered “What season are we in?” There were still leaves on the trees. We’re not ready for snow just yet. Technically we’re still in the Fall season, then the next day, everything got melted and it went back up into the 50’s. Just “what season are we in, anyway?”

Let’s ponder upon that thought for a moment, not only meteorologically but liturgically and spiritually as well. **What season are we in?** As we lit our 1st candle of Advent earlier signifying the beginning of our new liturgical season, we find ourselves once again being caught in between in this annual **spiritual conundrum.** On one hand, we see many sights and sounds all around us telling us of what is coming, with a countdown of how many shopping days are left until Christmas, while on the other hand, we are being asked to wait, because Christ’s coming is still not yet. It’s not Christmas yet!

**The season of Advent is a real testament of our spiritual discipline, meditation, and reflection.** We are being called upon to do a reality check by asking ourselves, “what season are we in?” during this season of Advent. The Advent candles that we lit lift up the virtues and values that we celebrate during this season….HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE. We may put up all the decorations and trees all we want, but are we also making room in our hearts for the coming of Christ? Have we checked him out at the door and not inviting Christ in, by the way we shun or neglected others?

On this first Sunday of Advent, our Gospel reading taken from Luke calls for us to **pay attention** and **be vigilant** upon things that are around us and what is to come. We need to stay alert. As they say on the subway, **if we see something; say something!** Jesus was being asked by his disciples about what they could expect to see concerning God’s Kingdom, which is already here and is still yet to come. In response to what we’ve witnessed and experienced ourselves, we also have an obligation to inform and to share about it with others, as Christ promised to return once again.

Jesus gave his disciples a “heads up” of what is to come, not to scare them or anything, but so that they can be prepared and not be surprised by it. This was a message of HOPE, something to look forward to, while we struggle in the midst of personal trails and challenges in this life. But we’re not there yet, there are still works that needs to be done. It is microcosmic of the season which we are in right now. We’re not there just yet, we need to stay busy.

Jesus warned us about the repentance of our hearts, before it’s too late and that we need to get our acts together and our priorities straight. He reminded us to fix our eyes and our hope upon the future Kingdom to come. During this season, there will be many signs and wonders that might steer us away from Christ and grab our attentions. Our faith and our spiritual discipline are being put to the test. Jesus warned us that we must remain grounded in the Word of God and not to be influenced by those who proclaim false testimonies in God’s name. *“****Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words [God’s Word] will never pass away****.”[[1]](#footnote-1)“****Be on guard*** *so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the* ***worries of this life****, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap.* ***So we must be alert at all times!****”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Many of us may undoubtedly have fears and worries about our future. We all do! It’s perfectly normal, as human beings, to have worries and fears. We worry about the needs and welfare of our family, our health, our everyday needs, our children or grandchildren’s future and opportunities. However, remember what Jesus taught in one of his parables, *we must not worry about what we shall wear, what we shall eat or drink, for doesn’t God care more for us than the birds in the air and the lilies of the field?*[[3]](#footnote-3) We must NOT get caught in the worldly frenzy of “having more” means a better life, while compromising our personal relationship with our once and future coming Messiah. As Jesus said, “***only pagans go after these things[[4]](#footnote-4). Therefore, seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to us as well.[[5]](#footnote-5)* What season are we in? Whose master do we serve?**

More than 500 years before the 1st coming of Christ, the prophet Jeremiah also forewarned the Israelites about the long-expected Messiah. The Israelites were a people living in exile in Babylon where it was ruled by foreigners. These became refugees seeking for a better future for their next generations. HOPE was hard to come by for these people. Nevertheless, through the prophet Jeremiah, God reached out to the people and promised them that justice would eventually be served. God would protect them and restore them of comfort and joy, in spite of their great suffering, despair[[6]](#footnote-6) and hopelessness. God had heard the people’s cries and will fulfill what God has promised that a Messiah would come to rescue them. However, the people must also honor their part of the covenant, by confessing and repenting their sins and turning their faith back to God. Meantime, we must stay awake and keep watch of the Messiah and the Kingdom that is to come. This was their message of HOPE!

In Advent, we not only give thanks for God’s coming as Christ, but we also look forward to Jesus’ return.[[7]](#footnote-7) **Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation, while holding God in trust of a promised future.** It is a season of preparation and imagination of what lies ahead, not to our own accomplishments but through the grace of God. This period of waiting challenges us to **look up, pay attention,** and **be ready**.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This season of HOPE invites us to look beyond our immediate safe and “comfort zone” by stretching out not only our hands towards others but our imagination of what God’s kingdom may look like in our future. **If Christmas means that we are to embrace peace among those whom we love and friends and neighbors around us, we’ve got works cut out for us. For as long as we still see signs of hostilities, hatred, and violence imposed upon another human soul, it would be selfish of us that to proclaim that our nights are silent, with all is calm and all is bright. We simply cannot!**

We cannot recount God’s blessings upon us without acknowledging that many are suffering and shivering in the cold, without a shelter or not having enough to eat. **The arrival of the Messiah is certainly not for the exclusive few and chosen, but universally for ALL who come and seek their faith.**

***So, what season are we in?***  We are in the season of looking out to seek our **FAITH** being manifested through God’s happening. We are in the season of refining our **FAITH** so that we may withstand all the trials and challenges ahead of us. We are in the season of dwelling upon God’s promises of **HOPE, PEACE, JOY**, and **LOVE.**

As one theologian summed up what this season is all about, Joel Green wrote “***the coming of the Son of Man and disclosure of God’s reign will be sudden, unexpected, at any time, and global. For those who trust God and whose trust of God is mirrored in their own faithfulness, the coming of the end is not a calamity to be feared but redemption to be welcomed****.”[[9]](#footnote-9)*

During this season of Advent, **may we remain vigilant not only for our own welfare, but for the welfare of others. Let us be intentional in seeking out of our customary and ordinary lives. Let us be vigilant of the tell-tale signs of God’s renewed Kingdom that is to come. We shall *focus our attentions not on the events or displays [that are happening around us] but rather focus on Jesus’ life and mission in our time and our lives in his future![[10]](#footnote-10)***

As disciples of Christ, we live in the reality of the presence, as well as the hope of our future according to God’s timing and God’s will. When we have HOPE in our lives, we recognize that although the seasons of our lives may evolve (or sometimes throw us a surprise), but God’s words will never pass away and God’s promise will never fail us at the end.

The world is yearning for a new hope and a new beginning with peace, joy, and love that only the Messiah Child can bring. Let us listen more closely! Open our eyes more widely! See what God has been doing already and what He is about to do. Come, Lord Jesus, Come! (Maranatha!)

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Luke 21:33* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 21:34-36* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 6:25-34* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Matthew 6:32* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Matthew 6:33* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ayres, Jennifer Ryan *Feasting on the Word Year C, Volume 1* P.4 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Hardick, Chip, Presbyterian Today, Nov/Dec 2018, P.47* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Beach-Verhey, Kathy Feasting on the Word, Year C, Volume 1, p.23* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Green, Joel B., *Connections Year C, Volume 1, P.14* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Jennings, Willie James, *Connections, Year C, Volume 1,* P.14 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)