

## Hope for All the World Romans 15:8-13

Happy Advent! As a new church in a new season, we want to consider what we are doing. Jesus attacks traditionalism, elevating our traditions to the level of God's commandments. But traditions are inescapable. The only question is whether they are consistent with Scripture and edifying or not. It is possible for something to be lawful but not helpful, and this is what the Reformers found in much of the late medieval church calendar. They whittled it down to the Five Evangelical Feast Days: Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. This covers about half the year, followed by Trinity Sunday and season, making up "ordinary time" for the rest. It's good to frame your year around Jesus this way and not fundamentally by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Memorial Day, to be Christian first before American in orientation. "Advent" means "coming" and kicks off the church year. It looks back to Jesus' first coming and forward to his second.

### Hope for the Gentiles

The first promise of the gospel came right after the fall: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The Jews were given a lot: "to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 9:4-5). Jesus was a Jew sent to fulfill the promises made to Israel (v8)—the greater Moses (Dt. 18:15-18), a new Joshua, the royal son of David, the suffering servant. Included in these promises are the Gentiles who would worship the Lord (v9). David envisions singing praise among the Gentile nations (v9; Ps. 18:49). Lest we think the nations aren't joining in, they're exhorted to in verse 10, quoting Deuteronomy 32:43: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." If you want to pick a few nations and leave others out, don't: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him" (v11; Ps. 117:1). And in case we think this is just an invitation that will be rejected: "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope" (v12; Is. 11:10, 1). The Jews didn't worship a tribal god, but the God of all the tribes. They longed for the day when the remnant of Israel and all the Gentiles would gather to God. Jesus has come and yet the effects of his advent are not complete. All the nations haven't come yet. This is the already/not yet of Advent, which is different than the already/not ever or already/bide your time. This is a season of *hope*.

### On Penitential Seasons

In Malachi, the last book in the OT looking forward to Jesus, Israel is told to repent in specific ways: polluted food on the altar, unfaithfulness to the wife of youth; robbing God from tithes and offerings (1:7; 2:14; 3:8). A good prophet can tell you exactly what you need to repent of. A bad prophet or tradition sprays general guilt in your direction. What you want is an honest rebuke like a kiss on the lips, clear knowledge of your sin, a true turning away from that sin, and the assuring joy of your salvation returned. This process depends on your heart, not the passing of a certain number of days. Being relieved from the burden of sin makes you feel like a calf leaping out of his stall (Mal. 4:2). The Old Covenant had one fast day (*Yom Kippur*) and many feast days. In our time of New Covenant fulfillment, fasts are for particular repentance and mission (Acts 9:9; 13:2-3).

### Embodying Hope

We are part of God's successful ongoing mission to save the world; let Advent be marked by hopeful anticipation. The year is almost done. How can you celebrate? The Advent wreath has a candle for each of the four weeks before Christmas and then a fifth in the middle lit on Christmas Eve or Day. For something to do daily, readings and chocolate calendars are helpful. Above all, prepare remembering that God came to become one of us to experience everything we do, to be vulnerable to the effects of sin and weakness. He became poor so that we would become rich, to love us so that we might love him and others.

## NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

### **Today's Passage: Romans 15:8-13**

*8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." 10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

1. "Advent" means "coming" and refers to the four weeks before the incarnation, when the Second Person of the Trinity became a baby named Jesus. What is the day called when Jesus was born?
2. Why does Paul say in verse 8 that Jesus was Jewish ("a servant to the circumcised")?
3. Gentiles are non-Jewish people, anyone not part of an Israelite household. In the Old Testament, what did they think the Gentiles would do (verse 12)?
4. At Advent we look forward to Christmas and to Jesus' second coming, his final Advent. Paul wants us to be full of joy and peace, abounding in hope by the Holy Spirit. Draw some things that make you joyful and hopeful at Christmas.

### **Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:**

*12 And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."—Romans 15:12*