

Redwoods Presbyterian Church  
Larkspur, California  
November 29, 2015  
Advent Homily

A homily is a short sermon. My homily today addresses three topics, briefly. It tells “why” we do the things we do on this day and the meaning of Advent.

1. The lighting of Advent candles at the beginning of the service.

In the ancient world, people marked the turning of the light into winter’s season of darkness by lighting fires and prayed for the return of the light.

The church Christianized this practice in the lighting of the Advent wreath. To us, the candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ’s coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

2. The Story of Salvation which we just experienced

I inherited this worship format for the First Sunday of Advent when I arrived here eight years ago. We remember Jesus’ birth in the context of our resurrection faith. We affirm our wholeness or salvation by God’s grace through faith as we recall Jesus’s birth, life, death and resurrection.

3. The Meaning of Advent

Advent means “coming.” We expect Christ’s return at any moment but not in the sense that he is coming to institute his new realm imminently as some politicians say and therefore propose that we don’t have to worry about climate change or improved healthcare and the like. The meaning of Jesus’s coming has the opposite effect. We say, “Come, Lord Jesus” in the sense that we want his prophetic proposals for peace and justice to take effect in every age. Jesus always desires a better world environmentally, medically, economically, racially, ethnically, politically and religiously. Jesus comes when the world in part and in whole becomes the realm of God.

So let it be. Amen.