

The Season of Advent: Year C, Week 1

The liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany are rich occasions to reconnect with scripture and renew faith in the Risen Christ. From the Incarnation to the Second Coming of Jesus, and all the prophecy and history in-between, lies a grand story filled with lush symbols that reinforce God's unwavering promises of hope, love, joy and peace.

From the readings of the liturgy of the first Sunday of Advent, the text of Luke 21 can seem a little horrific. It speaks of astronomic and sweeping displays of creational upheaval where "the powers of heaven will be shaken." Surviving this volcanic chaos will be a challenge, but embedded in this Gospel story are also directives on how to "stand erect with head held high" and own your redemption.



LUKE 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Chosen One coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties

of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Chosen One."

For all the readings for the First Sunday of Advent click [here](#).

FOR REFLECTION

1. How would you compare and/or contrast the first coming of Jesus (the nativity story) with the second coming of Jesus (in a cloud with power and great glory). As an LGBT person or ally, what gift/gifts would you bring to Jesus at each coming? With which Jesus – the historical Jesus or the glorious Jesus – do you see yourself connecting with? Why
2. In the first part of the Gospel, Jesus elaborates on two very different experiences of the same reality: dying of fright and standing erect. Based on your life journey, as you navigate through sin and grace, which experience do you see yourself allying with to stand before the Chosen One: dismayed, perplexed and frightened or standing erect with head raised ?
3. The second part of the Gospel lists directives on how to prepare for the great (and terrible) day of the coming of Jesus. During this advent what is God requiring of you in terms of prayer, preparation and vigilance? What strengths would you need to summon to remain focused?
4. Beginning with Moses, history is full of examples of people who have “been to the mountaintop, peered into the promised land, heard and believed the promise of a better future and found the challenges of the present not only endurable, but hopeful” - *Numbers 27: 12-17*. As an LGBT person or ally, would you agree or disagree with this statement that amidst the very real setbacks and challenges faced by the LGBT community, one can still “stand up erect with head raised?”
5. What does the advent wreath symbolize to you? What personal connections do you feel with the evergreens, the colors of the candles, and the flame? Would you change any of the symbols or colors to create your own personal advent wreath? What would that wreath look like and what would it symbolize to you?
6. In the reading from Jeremiah, Yahweh says, “The days are coming when I will fulfill the promise I made...” What promises do you believe God has made to LGBT people and allies? Do you believe they will come true? Have you seen any already come true?

PRAYER

Psalm 63:2-9

O God, you are my God,
For you I long;
For you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water.

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
To see your strength and your glory.



For your love is better than life,
My lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.

My soul shall be filled as with a banquet;
My mouth shall praise you with joy.
On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
For you have been my help;

In the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
Your right hand holds me fast.