

Devotional Blog - 1st Advent

Hello! I'm Kan, the minister of Hampton Mission Partnership. It is lovely to share with you in this weekly devotional blog.

This Sunday, we enter the Season of Advent.

Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical calendar of Western Christianity, a time that leads up to Christmas. And the word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, means "coming,"

This "Coming" is seemingly absurd for it is describing a "now and the not yet" moment. It is now because we relive the story of Jesus' birth, born in a manger and was worshipped as a King in our Nativity play and Carol singing. At the same time, we expect the second coming of the risen Jesus, who raised from the dead after dying on the cross to forgive the sin of all humanity.

So this strangeness of "coming", certainly coincides the strangeness of our days due to the current pandemic that we are facing. Months of lockdown and restrictions, social distancing vortex, hand-sanitising obsession, choices of face coverings and unfairly categorised tier systems are inevitably right in front of our eyes. Life has become strange and wired to our expectation, our habits and our sensibility. Where can we go? How can we celebrate?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian and Lutheran pastor who was martyred towards the end of the second world war once said, "*The celebration of Advent is possible, only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come.*"

Advent season gives us four consecutive weeks to wait for something bigger, better and greater to come. And waiting is not a synonym for wasting, nor substituting it by wanting in our culture of impatience and instant gratification.

Therefore, the strangeness of Advent actually helps us to pay deeper attention to the present wired moment, not live forever looking forwards nor dwelling on the past glory. But truly living in this moment. Then, we may discover to our surprise that the meaning lies in the waiting. This wired moment becomes to us a "**present**".

Sunday, 29 November y

The Advent season invites us into a deeper, truer encounter with ourselves, with the world, and most important of all, with the one who is greater than all humanity whom we call God, revealing himself in the person of Jesus, born in a manger, worshipped by the wisemen, the shepherds and the great crowd of glorious angels.

So, Advent is waiting, but we wait in anticipation. It's active. It comes with action to **Be Still**, for when we are waiting, God is working.

Endless biblical characters who had to wait upon God and learned to do so positively and patiently:

Abraham and Sarah, waiting for 25 years for their first born child promised by God.

Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, waiting for hundred years for the day of the Lord to deliver the ultimate salvation and God's glory.

John the Baptist, waiting between times of the old and the new covenants.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, experienced a lifetime of waiting.

So, friends of Hampton Mission Partnership, in this special Advent season, may you look eagerly when you tell and retell the story of Jesus' birth and his coming, may you let the message of salvation history come to you. May the Christ child break into your world to comfort you, heal you, liberate you and transform you that the best is yet to come.

And may his love unite us at a time when the pandemic is keeping us apart!

Emmanuel. God is with us.

Amen.

"God of hope, I look to you with an open heart and yearning spirit. During this Advent season, I will keep alert and awake, listening for your word and keeping to your way in and through Jesus, the Christ Child" ~ Matthew Kelly