

## Advent 1B: 2022

*Here we are again.* The first Sunday of another Advent. For some of us this is the sixtieth, seventieth, or more Advents we have begun, but once again we are told to wait, to be eager, to expect, to be patient. The more Advents we have under our belts the harder this gets because – frankly – we know how this Advent – this time of waiting - will end. Don't we? After we light all four candles on our wreath it will end just like every other Advent we have known. We will come back here on Christmas Eve. We will find that Christ whom we have longed for is born. The stable and trees are set up. We will sing our favorite carols, go home, eat too much, and wait for after Christmas sales. Then we get on with our lives until Ash Wednesday or until Advent comes again.

When you think about it the whole thing seems kind of silly – we almost begin Advent with a wink and a nod or a weary sense of Deja Vu – We are grown up people playing pretend.

But wait. Let's rethink this. The advent message is more than just waiting. Advent calls us to **Watch**. It doesn't only ask us to be patient or to be eager or to expect, but to keep our eyes open, to be **alert**, to be **watchful**. Jesus wants us to enter Advent looking for something new.

Here is what I would like us to do. Here is what I would suggest. As bizarre and heretical as this may sound for the time being forget about Christmas. Try your best to put Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the whole stable out of your minds. No trees – no decorations – no carols. Forget about Bethlehem and angels and shepherds. Yes, that

is how God came to us in the past, but today we begin a new Advent – an advent in a time of pandemic.

God may choose to come to us this Advent in a whole new way. If we are occupied with waiting for the old comfortable and familiar God, we can miss the unexpected God. If we make the decision about how God will reveal his love to us, we may well miss his loving mercy when it comes to us in a totally different way. If we look for him only in the familiar manger, we may forget to watch for him in his sisters and brothers, who are the least of his little ones.

This Advent let's not box God in. This Advent we will not limit God's power – God's ability to totally surprise us. Instead now that the first candle of Advent, 2022 is lit, you and I will instead be watchful and alert. We will keep our eyes open and look around us. Because this Advent you and I do what Jesus asks us to do. This Advent we will watch.