

Sermon for the First Evensong in Advent

'Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen vessels.'

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Though we set up our trees, put up our lights, hang our wreaths, and establish our Advent Calendars, we are deceived if we believe that this season is a season of cheer. It is a season of waiting. For what do you wait?

A god is coming to you. Not a savior. Not yet. Not a suffering servant. Not yet. Not the seed of Eve. Not yet. A god.

Behold, Isaiah, His messenger, goes before Him, to *make straight His paths*, *'I am the Lord, and there is no other, beside me, there is no God.'*

A god is not coming, but the God, *and there is no other.*

You who wait, have you waited for the God, or have you waited for 'a god?'

You have many gods, for you are pagans, even as I am, for only death makes one a Christian.

What is it you fear? What is it you love?

Fear poverty, for you love Mammon, yet *man cannot serve both God and Mammon.*

Fear loneliness, for you love attention, yet you *tremble and are dismayed*, for you know not that *'the Lord God is with you wherever you go.'*

Fear shame, for you love honor, yet it is a daughter of the Lord that weeps upon His feet, and a son of Hell that laughs.

You fear what you love, and you have loved idols. Things made with hands, as money and material; things not made with hands, like pride and fame; but the Lord speaks: *'They shall be put to shame, and be humiliated, all of them; they shall go to confusion, those makers of idols.'*

It is no small thing to trust in idols, to find your joy in the future promise of prosperity, of human attention, of worldly fame; these things the world gives, God cares not if you receive these, only whether you trust in them; only if you love them. Yet you love them. *'You strive with him who formed you.'*

Let him who receives such things in humiliation, receive them in thanksgiving.

Let him who receives such things in arrogance and vanity, receive them in terror.

For you who long after human things and human honors long after man-made creations. Man himself was made, and all he makes is doubly made, for man himself is a thing made, and *'woe to him who strives with him who formed him.'*

The God is coming, the only God, the one true God.

He declares, and demands you listen, lest you perish: *'I am the Lord, and there is no other, beside me there is no God; I form light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things.'*

This God is coming, for *there is no other*. How then shall you, *who are wicked*, await His coming?

Set up your tree, you who damned yourself by a tree, and confess by it that you are children of Adam, who damned all humanity.

Put up your lights, you who *dwell in darkness*, and confess that apart from the God who comes, you shall never know light, *for He is the light of the world*.

Hang your wreaths, you who are *mortal*,
and confess that you cannot contend with *His*
Spirit, which is ever living, and everlasting, *the beginning and end*.

Put upon your walls your Advent calendar, and pray '*Lord, teach us to number our days.*'

'For dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return.'

[All these customs seem meaningless, but they are signs rendered by those in prison, who have nothing but time, and hope. Those who await liberation.]

All things die, and return to the earth. Even the faithful shall die, and the grave shall consume them.

What prayer shall you render from the grave?

Even now, ten thousand million baptized dead from everlasting to everlasting cry out '*Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.*'

For behold, from the dust of our mortality shall be born the seed of Eve; and not just the seed of Eve, but a god. And not just a god, but the God; not just the God, but a suffering servant; not just a suffering servant, but the Savior. From the dust of Holy Mary, who has *opened* and received the Word of heaven, the water of creation, [*the righteousness of the skies*] shall come forth our only hope and wealth, our sole friend and honor, for Mary, the mother of God, shall bear forth the Son of God, *the Lamb, the ruler of the earth*, that all who have been made sons of God by baptism might rise with Him from death into immortality; shall be born of the dust of these earthen graves unto the ages of ages by *Him who opens the doors, and cuts the bars of iron.*'

Therefore, '*Let the earth open.*'

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*'There is no God
beside him.'*

*Preached by Pastor
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*Sermon Text: Isaiah
45:2-8*