



November 29, 2016

Dear BoL,

Many of you were away for the first Sunday in Advent and I will be traveling in coming weeks. So I wanted to let you know that the sermon will soon be on the website (www.breadoflifeithaca.org), and make two further thoughts as we enter this season together.

First, the sermon emphasized our participation in the liturgical life. I am not saying you have to be Anglican. I am saying that life is unavoidably defined by rituals and liturgies. Holidays, television, sports, politics, media, and academic life all have rhythms that shape us, and so we ought become more conscious about which rituals own our time, money, and energy. Focusing on Advent and pushing away the rituals of consumer Christmas is one way to do that. This can be difficult and often conflict with important family traditions. There's no simple solution here; I realize that. But this is the season to reflect.

I also made an announcement about Bread of Life Giving Day on 6 December. Coming after the sermon this may sound something like, "spend less on Christmas and give more to church." That was not the point. We have more information about BoL Giving Day on the website. In short there are three goals. One, to get all or most of us giving to Bread of Life automatically, whether online or through e-banking. That will do a lot to help us manage our budget. Two, draw us all to pray and reflect on our habits of giving and generosity. And three, pray for the church to continue to grow numerically in order to become financially independent.

Finally I want to leave us all with some Advent thoughts that I left out of the sermon. The U.S. Election has surprised us all with social brokenness that most of us did not think much about before now. Our media habits (rituals) are not helping most of us. The church is called to put its hope in God and his coming kingdom as that alone can repair all that's wrong in our world. Out of this great hope, the church is empowered to welcome and love one another fully and wholly. If we believe what we confess, we are the one place today where compassion, listening, love, and diversity can be a model for our world. I leave the final points below and you can listen to the sermons for a fuller context (only 10 minutes).

1. Push out the distractions and busy-ness of consumer Christmas. Read Scripture daily. And set aside time to sit in patience, watching and waiting.
2. Clear out the behaviors "of the night" in the reading from Romans and habits of hedonism and self-appeasement. Allow yourself to wait in the pain, ambiguity, need, and hunger that is common to us all in this world.
3. Put aside empty hopes and the securities we place in jobs, houses, political movements, accomplishments, popularity, and intelligence. They will not satisfy.
4. Set your hopes on the Son of David who will come to put all to rights again. And live as people of the day that dawns upon us now.

Peace,

Ryant