



RENEWING THE PROCESS OF PREPARING FOR GOD'S COMING

A person finally decides to put that long standing grudge aside and try to renew an old, but broken friendship. Another person embarks on a searching and moral inventory of their life, including those dark secrets and ego covered shortcomings. Another reads from the gospel of Matthew and encounters those profoundly searing words from John the Baptist: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" Such individuals have begun that rigorous work of preparing for the coming of God into their lives and hearts.

Christmas is that time of year when Christians proclaim the coming of God in Christ through the birth of a baby, Jesus. And as the hymn so aptly cries out, "*O Lord, how shall I meet you, How welcome you aright,*" Christians renew again a process of preparing for the coming of God.

This Advent, the time of year when we are especially called to prepare for, wait for this divine coming, we'll lift up four themes – with repentance, amid prayer, with the Word of God, and filled with glory.

First, repentance – as introduced in the initial paragraph. Confession (speaking the truth about our brokenness) and repentance (changing our ways) helps to clear the moral land within our hearts. Like a farmer who would remove stumps and rocks before a spring planting, people of faith can first prepare for God's coming by clearing the moral landscape within them. Toss this rock of anger. Admit the presence of that stump of greed. Be clear about the hardened land within our hearts and seek God's renewing Spirit.

Prayer comes next. Jesus prepared himself for a life of ministry by going away in prayer, up mountainsides, into the deserts, away from the crowd. In our congested world, prayer greatly assists us to focus anew on the profound presence and purposes of God. Even more, prayer allows us to hear and listen to the divine voice of God. James said in chapter 5:16 "When a believing person prays, great things happen." Who can truly imagine preparing for God to enter our lives and hearts without prayer?! And so we do.

Preparing with the Word of God – preparing by reading the bible! More than any other vehicle, the bible gives the reader a "glimpse of the face of God." (from Max Lucado's: Turn.) Preparing for an invisible guest surely is an awesome quagmire. But it is through the pages of God's very Word that we receive the picture, the personality, the essence of God. Take time this Advent to read again and again the Sunday lessons, or other passages.

With Glory! Preparing for Christ with glory! And why not! The King of Glory is coming. He who delivers us from our sins, who offers an everlasting presence, and promises that nothing can separate us from His love is worthy of such glory. And so with song, with choirs, with joy in one's heart, we prepare by glorifying God in the Highest, as the angels first did!

At Advent we rev up the engines, renew the process, and focus well beyond the decorated trees and holiday parties as we prepare for God to come into our lives. Join us for worship, and be sure to spend private and corporate time in repentance, prayer, reading God's Word and being filled with joy to glorify the Lord. Then we'll see you Christmas Eve and Day!