

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – DECEMBER 3, 2017

"BE WATCHFUL! BE ALERT!"

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

NO DOUBT YOU ARE THINKING I GOT MY DATES MIXED UP.....

WE HAVE A NUMBER OF BEGINNINGS DURING THE YEAR.....

THE CALENDAR YEAR, OF COURSE, JANUARY TO DECEMBER

THE FISCAL YEAR.....JULY 1 OR OCTOBER 1 FOR GOVT....

ALSO, OUR BIRTH YEAR....BIRTH DATE BEGINS A NEW YEAR....

TODAY, AS ANOTHER SEASON OF ADVENT BEGINS, WE CELEBRATE THE

BEGINNING OF A NEW LITURGICAL YEAR.....

NOW WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT ADVENT, TO ME, IS THAT ON THE ONE

HAND WE DO LOOK BACK AND RETURN TO THE STORIES LEADING UP TO

THE BIRTH OF JESUS, WE REMEMBER THAT CHRIST BECAME INCARNATE

IN THE WORLD THROUGH MARY GIVING BIRTH TO JESUS AND LAYING

HIM IN A HUMBLE MANGER.

WE ALSO, HOWEVER LOOK AHEAD AND ANTICIPATE WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS.....

THAT CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN, AT SOME UNSPECIFIED TIME OF JUDGMENT.

ADVENT REAFFIRMS FOR US THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE PAST

AND HE WILL INDEED WILL RETURN IN THE FUTURE....

SO ADVENT SAYS TO US THAT WE LIVE IN A STATE OF "IN-BETWEEN", AS IT WERE -

"ALREADY BUT NOT YET"

***AND, PERHAPS PARADOXICALLY, BETWEEN THIS REMEMBERING OF
THE PAST AND ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE, THE SEASON OF ADVENT
CHALLENGES US IN OUR GOSPEL TO "BE WATCHFUL. BE ALERT"
IN OTHER WORDS, LIVE FULLY IN THE PRESENT, PAY ATTENTION TO THE
PRESENT MOMENT!
TO NOW! NOT YESTERDAY! AND NOT TOMORROW!
YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW WILL BOTH TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES
NOT WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER THIS MORNING!
NOT WHAT WILL HAPPEN THIS AFTERNOON!
BUT NOW! THE PRESENT MOMENT! PAY ATTENTION TO NOW!
BE ALERT! NOTICE YOUR PRESENT MOMENT!
THAT'S A SIMPLE MESSAGE ISN'T IT?
PAY ATTENTION TO NOW...THE PRESENT MOMENT!
PROBABLY COULDN'T BE MORE SIMPLE
BUT IT ALSO COULDN'T BE MORE CHALLENGING ...
WHAT COULD BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR US TO DO THAN PAY ATTENTION
TO THE PRESENT MOMENT....
THNK ABOUT IT, WE ARE HARD WIRED TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE PAST....
TO RECALL IT INCESSANTLY AND REPEATEDLY...OBSESSED BY IT
ESPECIALLY IF WE MADE A MISTAKE.....
AND WE FEEL GUILTY...
OR IF IT WAS IN ANY WAY TRAUMATIC, PAINFUL
WE KEEP RECALLING IT....WE END UP LIVING IN THE PAST...
TRYING AS HARD AS WE CAN TO MAKE THE PAST DIFFERENT***

*SO, SOME OF US LIVE IN THE PAST, ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE OLDER
AND WE HAVE MORE OF OUR PAST TO RECALL THAN WE HAVE A FUTURE
TO LOOK FORWARD TO
WE END UP SPENDING MORE TIME IN THE PAST THAN WE DO IN THE
PRESENT
IT CERTAINLY DOESN'T END UP HELPING US LIVE IN THE PRESENT OR
EVEN IN THE FUTURE, DOES IT?
BUT IT SO EASY TO DO!
MUCH EASIER THAN TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT -
THE NOW!
IT IS ALSO SO MUCH EASIER TO FIND OURSELF LIVING IN THE FUTURE...
E.G. WORRYING ABOUT OUR PLANS FOR THIS AFTERNOON OR THIS
EVENING..... WILL THEY WORK OUT?
SOME CHALLENGE WE ARE FACING TOMORROW, MONDAY...
PERHAPS A NEW TASK AT WORK OR A TEST AT SCHOOL...
AN IMPORTANT MEETING WITH SOMEONE THIS COMING WEEK
HOW WILL IT GO? WILL I BE SUCCESSFUL OR A FAILURE?
SO, IT IS ALWAYS EASIER TO BE DISTRACTED FROM OUR PRESENT
MOMENT BY BEING OBSESSED OVER TRIVIA IN THE PAST, OR
PREOCCUPIED WITH SOME ANXIETY OR EXCITEMENT ABOUT THE
FUTURE
THAN IT IS TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT
IT PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR US...
TO REALLY BE PRESENT TO WHAT SOME HAVE CALLED THE*

"SACRAMENT OF THE PRESENT MOMENT"...

IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT - THAT IS THE WAY A CHILD LIVES

BUT WE LOSE IT ALONG THE WAY.....AND WE NEED TO RETRIEVE IT

AND THAT IS WHERE GRACE IS FOR US - IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

THE PRESENT USUALLY SEEMS BORING - ORDINARY - DULL

TODAY WE CALL BEING PRESENT TO THE PRESENT: MINDFULNESS....

WHEN WE ARE ALERT, WE BECOME ATTUNED TO THE VIBRANCY OF ALL

THAT SURROUND US - THE BEAUTY, THE WONDER

ANOTHER THING STRIKING ABOUT LIVING IN THE PRESENT MOMENT --

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THERE IS NO STRESS WHEN WE LIVE IN THE

PRESENT MOMENT...

THERE MAY BE UNPLEASANT FEELINGS, INCLUDING PAIN, THAT WE

NEED TO FACE AND WORK THROUGH BUT THERE IS NO STRESS

STRESS IS NOT THE SAME AS PAIN

STRESS COMES ABOUT WHEN WE ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE OR

HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING IN THE PAST...

STRESS ABOUT THE PAST IS SOMETHING THAT WE CAN LET GO OF -

E.G. A STORY ABOUT TWO MONKS ON A JOURNEY THROUGH A FOREST,

COME TO A RAGING, RAGING RIVER.

**A FRAIL YOUNG WOMAN SITS BY ITS BANK, UNABLE TO GET TO THE
OTHER SIDE.**

ONE OF THE MONKS PICKS HER UP IN HIS ARMS AND CARRIES HER

ACROSS AND THE MONKS CONTINUE ON THEIR WAY.

HOURS PASS IN SILENCE. FINALLY, THE OTHER MONK BURSTS OUT,

"HOW COULD YOU HAVE DONE SUCH A THING?

***YOU KNOW WE'VE SWORN NEVER TO TOUCH A WOMAN!"
THE FIRST MONK SIMILES, "I CARRIED THAT WOMAN FOR A MOMENT
AND SET HER DOWN HOURS AGO," HE SAYS GENTLY.***

BUT YOU'VE BEEN CARRYING HER AROUND ALL DAY."

***OUR PAINFUL EMOTIONS ARE OUR OWN BURDENS. IF WE CARRY THEM
ACROSS THE RIVER, AND THEN SET THEM DOWN, WE WILL BE FREE TO
ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF THE FOREST AND THE GLOW OF THE SUNLIGHT
THRU THE TREES - THE BEAUTY OF THE DAY.***

IT BEARS REPEATING -

IN THE PRESENT MOMENT THERE IS NO STRESS....

***WHEN WE ACCEPT WHAT IS SO RIGHT NOW, EVEN IF WE'RE TIRED OR
FRIGHTENED OR HURT, WE DON'T NEED TO ALSO FEEL STRESSED.***

***WE MAY OR MAY NOT BE HAPPY - BUT WE'RE OPEN TO THE REALITY OF
WHAT LIFE IS AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME***

AND WE'RE NOT ALLOWING STRESS TO DO FURTHER DAMAGE TO US.

(C.F. TIMESHIFTING BY STEFAN RECHTSTAFFEN, MD)

***MY PLAN IS THE FURTHER DEVELOP THIS TOPIC OF BEING ALERT, BEING
MINDFUL AND LIVING IN THE PRESENT THE NEXT TWO WEEKS OF
ADVENT AND HOPEFULLY GIVE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE IN THE
PRESENT MOMENT....***

LET ME CONCLUDE BY ENCOURAGING YOU TO CARVE OUT A BRIEF

PERIOD DURING YOUR DAY DURING THE NEXT THREE WEEKS OF ADVENT

JUST FOR YOURSELF - DOING WHAT YOU WANT - IT BELONGS TO YOU

IT MAY BE 5 MINUTES - OR 10 - OR 30 MINUTES...

BUT EVERYDAY, AT THE SAME TIME

OF COURSE, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO DO ANYTHING

IT IS TIME FOR ENJOYMENT OF THE THINGS AROUND YOU -

TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION, IF YOU WILL

PERHAPS, PRAYER

OF COURSE, IT MAY FEEL LIKE A "WASTE OF TIME"

HOPEFULLY, YOU WILL EXPERIENCE IT AS BEING PRESENT IN THE

MOMENT, PRESENT TO THE PROCESS OF YOUR LIFE - MINDFUL

HOPEFULLY, IT WILL ALLOW YOUR LIFE TO SLOW DOWN AND

APPRECIATE THE GIFT THAT IT IS...

IT MIGHT BE IN THE MORNING, DURING THE AFTERNOON OR AT NIGHT

BUT FIND A TIME OF AT LEAST A FEW MINUTES DURING YOUR DAY,

EVERY DAY DURING ADVENT

LET'S END WITH AN EXERCISES YOU MIGHT USE AT THAT TIME OR AT

ANY TIME TO EXPERIENCE THE PRESENT MOMENT -

BUT ESPECIALLY AT TIMES OF STRESS

BUT YOU CAN DO IT AT ANY TIME -

***INCLUDING YOUR FEW MOMENTS OF PERSONAL TIME-DURING THE NEXT
THREE WEEKS***

THINK OF IT AS A "PAUSE" BUTTON FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL USE....

LET'S DO IT TOGETHER.....FOR A MOMENT

JUST CLOSE Y OUR EYES FOR A MOMENT FIRST

AND TAKING A DEEP BREATH - IN AND OUT

ANOTHER DEEP BREATH - INHALE AND EXHALE

AND FINALLY, ANOTHER DEEP BREATH - IN AND OUT

PLEASE OPEN YOUR EYES - THAT'S IT

THREE TIMES - AT ANY TIME - IT'S THAT SIMPLE

IT CAN HELP US LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

TO BE ALERT DURING ADVENT!

***(C.F. TIMESHIFTING BY STEPHAN RECHSTAFFEN, M.D.
FOR THE EXERCISES")***