

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Already but Not Yet

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Mark 1:14-15

*Jesus is God-for-us, God-with-us, God-within-us. Jesus is God giving himself completely, pouring himself out for us without reserve. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts*, 67)*

A major theme of Jesus' preaching is that the kingdom of God has *already drawn near*. Then, why are we still waiting when the time has already been "fulfilled" by the ministry and presence of Jesus? What are we waiting for when Jesus is already *Emmanuel*, God-with-us?

We are living in the mystery of God's presence. This presence is already with us, and yet we yearn for it. God is with us, and yet God is still giving himself over to us, pouring himself out, filling what remains empty in us—and in our families, communities, church and world. Jesus has come. Jesus is coming. Both are true, and so we wait for that final return of Jesus. Until that day, it will always be Advent for us.

Emmanuel, you have already come into the world and into our hearts. Your kingdom is already among us. Keep coming to us. Give yourself to us until we are completely yours, and you are ours. Amen.

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

The Living Word

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ...

Hebrews 4:12

*Christ is the Word of God who became flesh for us. Through the discipline of the Book, the Word of God can continue to become flesh in us. Reading the Scriptures as God's most intimate word for us is thus the realization of the incarnation in the concrete reality of our present life. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Selfless Way of Christ*, 77)*

The Bible is not like other books on our shelves. It is a living Word, an ongoing conversation between human beings and God. In this sense, it is not only an ancient story but a contemporary one. The story of God-with-us is still unfolding, from the Garden of Eden to the glory of Revelation. Just as God came to be with us in the human life of Jesus Christ, so God continues to "enflesh" himself in the words of the Bible.

This is why the inspired words of Scripture can continue to act in us with the sharpness, liveliness and grace of God himself. God did not deliver his Word and disappear; God continues to dwell with us there.

Jesus, Word of God, enlighten us with your Spirit when we read the Bible or hear it proclaimed. Through this living Word, may we be united with you in thought and deed. Amen.