

You Americans are an impatient bunch. How you want things now, Amazon, Instagram, Social media, Google must serve you immediately and with free shipping. Everything needs to be available within a couple of clicks. People respond to your calls or texts without delay. We're not a people who likes to wait, on God or anything else.

Here we are again, it's Christmastime, No! Don't you dare give into this world. It's Advent. Wait. Prepare. How desperately you need to observe Advent. But you Americans aren't very good at that are you.

You need to prepare. Be disciplined. It's not easy. Name one good thing in your life that ever came easy. Discipline. Wait. How can you feast unless you fast? Christmas and its 12 days will come soon enough, now is the time of preparation. Don't let the world's version of Christmas ruin your Advent.

Today, a new Church year. The calendar of man is set by the rotation of the earth around the sun. The Church's calendar is set by the rotation of the Church around the Son, the Christ, the Light of the world. In every season in the Church Year, we bask in the light of the Son, crucified for our sins and raised from the dead for our salvation. But in each season, the light strikes us from a different angle.

The Scriptures, the Gospel lesson today with Holy Week ritual, God's people since... always, living in a liturgical pattern; fasting before the feast. Fast now. Fast this Advent spiritually in repentance, in your special devotions and activity. Perhaps you will fast bodily in various ways, but now is preparation for the feast to come.

Prepare for Christmas by seeing why He rides into Jerusalem. the significance of the Gospel lesson. The only one in the Church year that is repeated, 1<sup>st</sup> Sun. in Advent and Palm Sunday. In both places, for preparation, before celebrating the Key feasts of the Church, of Christ. In your preparation for Christmas, you see why He comes. Why He comes to take on our flesh and be born of the virgin. He lays down His life of His own accord. He comes, O Daughter of Zion, to make you His Bride. He comes not for the crowds, not for the masses, not for humanity in some generic way. He comes for you, His chosen one, His beloved, as though there were only you. And no force on earth, no matter how many reject Him, not even your own sinful rebellion, no, nothing can stop Him.

This King is coming for you. You don't have to go out searching for Him; faith is not a self-help program. He comes to you. Martin Luther put it this way: *"Jesus is a king like no other. You do not seek Him; He seeks you. You don't fight for Him, He fights for you. You do not find Him; He finds you. For the*

*from you. Your faith comes from Him, not from you. And all that your faith works in you comes from Him, not from you. And this King's greatest glory is when He rides lowly to serve you."*

Now is the time to prepare for Christmas. How are you going to prepare? There's much to do. Decorations, gifts. Preparing for family travels, family meals, cards, making sure everyone on your list has been taken care of. You work, prepare to make sure everything is just right, just the perfect gift, have the picture-perfect Christmas. You have much to do these next 24 days. Important. But that is not true preparation during Advent.

True preparation for Christmas takes place here and in your homes in family devotions. What truly matters. What truly last.

As your life has a liturgical order guided by the Scripture, by our Lord, as you discipline children to wait to unwrap the presents, wait and prepare.

Prepare for the staggering joy of Christmas by the Divine Service, Midweek Service, adding to your daily prayers, family devotions, repentance, reflection on how you live.

Along with St. Paul, to **walk properly**, Put away the works of darkness, the selfish passions of your sinful lusting. Put away: your immoral thoughts; your craving for material things, for entertainment; every distraction that pulls you away from the needs and works for your family, friends and neighbors.

If you properly prepare, nothing will disappoint you this year, not gifts you can't wait to return, or gifts you didn't get or can't afford to buy, or when family can't get along, or heartbreak when family can't get together or when the meal and plans don't turn out right, or when loneliness sets in and you wish it could be like Christmas you long remember. No, properly preparing for Christmas, for your King, this Christmas will not disappoint.

For Your King Himself comes here to bind you up, fill you with His joy. And with all the distractions and trappings and busyness out there; prepare rightly, stay focused upon Your King, what this season is all about.

Let this staggering joy of His comings flow over and through you and into your homes and communities. Hosanna to the Son of David! Nothing greater to sing than asking your Lord to save you. And your prayer is answered.

For this, He is born, laid in a manger, that you would partake of His Holy Body and Blood and your hearts made pure, your Hosannas ever more sincere and urgent. Advent, a time of repentance, preparation, devotions, waiting. 24 days. Don't let the world rob you of this time you desperately need. Behold, prepare to meet your King even today, who comes lowly to have you, now and for eternity.