

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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“Where are you Christmas? Why cant I find you, Why have you gone away?” Are you Team Grinch or Team Santa? We just have to look around after Thanksgiving all decorations switch to Christmas immediately after Black Friday. Grinch Lost.

And then suddenly there is today's gospel text. Which somehow isn't Christmas at all. Which doesn't point to the anticipation of what is to come. But a text that talks about the end. Again. And again, we hear phrases like “The end is near”. And the question quickly arises: Do the people responsible for choosing the text even know that Advent marks the beginning of a new season? That we want to celebrate a new beginning with Advent and are looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ? That we no longer want to think about the end of the world, but look confidently into the future.

We as WPLC community know about ADVENT not just pre-Christmas Party Season, but prepare for the coming of Christ.. But the constant talk about the end of the world seems a little out of place, even for us. Isn't Advent the beginning of the new church year? Isn't Advent a time of hope? Why did today's lesson from the Gospel (in which Jesus clearly speaks of the end of the world) make it into our lesson cycle? What do we do with this message that seems rather unsettling or even threatening as we prepare to

receive Christ as the babe in the manger and everything is geared toward festivity, coziness, and joy? And yes, I agree that this is not necessarily a message we expect or want to hear at this time of year.

I heard Vicar Taylor's sermon last year, and she was upset and sad about the terrible situation in Israel and Gaza. And I agree and there is Ukraine, Myanmar, and many more countries at war. Maybe there the Grinch is around. Let me tell you once more the apocalyptic setting Pastor Jason talked about last Sunday. The authors of the Gospel experienced the Jewish war, Romans destroyed the temple (and it is destroyed until today). The first Christian communities have been persecuted. They had a terrible time and Luke, and the authors picked up this theme. And some doubters might remember some of the words of Jesus and understood.

I want to keep this brief, because in the Gospel today we also hear of the new heaven and the arrival of the Son of Man. And we are not supposed to lie sad but to stand up and raise our heads. This is our offer to be awake for Advent and be aware.

What is our lesson of the Grinch story?

- 1- People still celebrate even all the presents are gone
2. do not exclude different looking outsiders, by color or different culture, origin
3. and maybe not fully intended by the author for me the joy coming by the heart and the community, not just the physical presents. They just symbolize Jesus as a present to us. It is of no help to be angry or mad

about the grinch or worse evil powers in our world. Do not feed war or evil with hate.

Do Not fear, Advent is like a new beginning. The church year ended with ALL SAINTS We have overcome the time of mourning, depression and distress. We can look to the future. Start from the beginning! Leave our old burdens behind us. With the time of Advent, we are given a great gift.

After the darkest night. After absolute hopelessness, something new begins. Revelation says. The old world has passed away.

So now the light of the coming Son of Man shines into the dark night.

There will be signs in the sun, the moon stars, Luke focuses his eyes on the essential. He shows us the way we should go - he shows us how we should prepare ourselves. He goes ahead of us on the path to the light with great steps of trust. He knows that at some point he will experience a better world. A world in which God dries our eyes. It is like a quiet voice speaking to us. "There is the light. It is there! Jesus is there! He has come into our darkness to light up our lives! He is the light in our darkness. We can trust in the good news and accept it anew every time.

But surely we don't necessarily need these Christmas frills for that? Isn't it much more about becoming a light to our neighbor? a warming light like our candles on our advent wreath. To remind each other that we have reason to hope. Isn't it much more about setting the right priorities? And making awareness for the call of Christ in our lives?

YOU CAN ONLY SEE CLEARLY WITH YOUR HEART! In the little book "The Little Prince", the fox gives a wise answer. In my opinion, he could also give this answer to our question how to be alert and awake for the coming of our Lord. by saying:" that only the heart can see clearly because the eyes miss what is important.". The fox goes on to reveal that each of us is responsible for what we have familiarized ourselves with.

"If there is love in your heart and your mind, you will feel like Christmas all the time." This is the turning punch line of the Grinch song, and for me also for Advent: The arrival of Jesus is also an arrival in our hearts and not just in the crib, in church. Celebrating Advent means allowing Christ to enter our everyday lives and our hearts once again so that we can one day see a better world. Because we can see better with our hearts, feel the warmth of the candles of the advent wreath, and feeling the warm coming of the son of man.

Amen