

Advent 1-A
December 2, 2007
8:00 only

The following story has been around for sometime, but its retelling on this first Sunday in Advent is quite appropriate.

Years ago, there lived a very a wealthy man who, with his devoted son, shared a passion for art collecting. Together, they traveled the world, adding only the finest art treasures to their collection. Priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, and many others, adorned the walls of the family estate. The widowed father looked with satisfaction as his only child became an experienced art collector. But the day came when war engulfed the nation, and the young man left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, the father received a telegram informing him that his beloved son had been killed while carrying a fellow soldier to a medic.

On Christmas morning, a knock came at the door of the old man's home. He opened the door and was greeted by a soldier with a large package in his hand. He introduced himself to the old man by saying, "I was a friend of your son. I was the one he was carrying to the medic when he was killed. May I come in for a few moments? I have something to show you."

"I am an artist," said the soldier, "and I want to give you this." As the old man unwrapped the package, the paper gave way to reveal a portrait of his son. Though the art critics would never consider the work a piece of genius, still the painting did feature the young man's face in striking detail, and seemed to capture his personality.

The following spring, the old man became ill and died. The art world was in anticipation! According to the will of the old man, all of the art works would be auctioned. The day soon arrived for the auction, and art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the world's most spectacular paintings. The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum's list. It was the painting of the man's son. The auctioneer asked for an opening bid. The room was silent. "Who will open the bidding with \$100?" he asked. Minutes passed with not a sound from those who came to buy. From the back

of the room, someone callously called out, "Who cares about that painting? It's just a picture of his son. Let's forget it and go on to the important paintings." Other voices echoed in agreement.

But the auctioneer replied, "No, we have to sell this one first. Now, who will take the son?" Finally, a friend of the old man spoke. "I knew the boy, so I'd like to have it. I will bid the \$100."

"I have a bid for \$100," called the auctioneer. "Will any one bid higher?" After a long silence, the auctioneer said, "Going once. Going twice. Gone!" The gavel fell. Cheers filled the room and someone was heard to say, "Now we can get on with it!"

However, the auctioneer looked at the audience and announced the auction was over. Stunned disbelief quieted the room. Someone spoke up and asked, "What do you mean it's over? We didn't come here for a picture of some old guy's son. What about all of these paintings? There is millions of dollars worth of art here! We demand you explain what's going on!"

The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will of the father, whoever takes the son... gets it all."

"...Who ever takes the Son... gets it all." This is the essence of the story of Christmas: Whoever receives the Son... receives it all.

From 1 John 5:11-12, we read:

11 And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

"Whoever has the Son... has life." The one who has the Son, has it all.

Today marks the beginning of the season of Advent, a season in which we hear the promise of a new life in Christ, the promise contained in not only the celebration of the first coming of Christ, but also in the promise of his second coming, bringing the kingdom of eternal life with Him.

Therefore, we wait and watch. Advent is known in the Christian church as a season of preparation and watchfulness. Advent – a season when the faithful heed the call to become more spiritually alert and attentive. Advent looks back at our Lord's first Advent, first coming to earth, to the birth of Jesus, the Christ.

Advent also is a time we prepare for the second coming of Christ at the end of the age. It is often said that we are fast approaching the "latter days," or "end times," as scripture calls them. And if so, then it is of paramount importance we get our spiritual lives in order. Biblical truth is indeed coming into reality. Biblical prophecy is being fulfilled in our... lifetime!

From Chapter two of Peter's second letter, we read about , "False prophets arose among the people...; false teachers secretly introduce destructive heresies..., denial of the Master..., the way of truth maligned..."

Are not these things happening today right before our very eyes? Do we recognize the signs of the "latter days," of the "end times" about which Peter writes? Thankfully, Jesus will come again, but this time as King, Ruler, and Monarch

I thoroughly enjoy the music of Robin Mark, a Celtic singer from Ireland. I was privileged to meet him at Kingdom Bound in 2003. In 1997, Robin mark wrote the now very popular song, "The Days of Elijah." For the chorus we hear, "Behold he comes riding on the clouds, shining like the son at the trumpet call; lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee, and out of Zion's hill salvation comes."

At the 9:15 and 11:00 services this morning, Paul Wilbur will be with us, and one of the songs we sang last week and will do again this morning is "The Days of Elijah." It is a very appropriate piece of music for this first Sunday in Advent, a time during which we not only remember the first coming of Jesus, but also look forward to His second coming in power as King, "Riding on the clouds, shining like the son, at the trumpet call." "And out of Zion's hill (the place of the Jewish Temple to where Jesus will return), salvation comes."

To receive salvation, one must receive Jesus. Referring back to our opening story, whoever has the Son, gets it all. Advent provides another opportunity for us to firm up our relationship with Jesus , so that at His second coming, we may, indeed, get it all.

Now to God who is forever Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.