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WATCH FOR GOD !!!!
Nov 28, 2021 1st Advent C

Happy new church year! Yes, Advent marks the start of a new cycle of telling the story of Jesus, starting with the preparation weeks before celebrating Jesus' birth, then moving on into Jesus' baptism, and the rest of that life that revealed God in a unique, personal and human way.

Our scriptures this morning are forward looking, looking for the fulfillment of God's promises, and how to recognize when these final times are coming. People have gotten all obsessive about this sometimes, trying to outline the steps, the signs, and so on. Jesus' example of being able to tell summer is coming by the fig tree getting leaves makes us think that everything will be clear and simple to tell....but it's not been so in history so far - these passages, and others like them, could refer to any of various ages humans have lived in so far. Somehow, as we become adults and realize what the world of humanity is really like, what politicians are really like, what world leaders are really like, what national agendas are really like - somehow, we think that this is as bad as things have ever been. No, I think it's more that our eyes are seeing more clearly what has been the way of things since people started; although it DOES seem to me that the bill for our neglect of the planet's health is coming due in our age. Not that neglecting the earth is new; just that we seem to be at a tipping point regarding our environment because of all the years of misuse. Maybe other generations before us have intuited this before....

Once again, like I preached a few weeks ago, I think Jesus' point is to make us aware and alert ALL THE TIME. God is always here AND God is also always coming in new ways. I mean, God was here before God came in flesh to humanity - we have never been without God. Yet the revelation that was coming in Jesus was unique, new, & revealed more of God to us.

A while back, when I was cleaning BBS things in my office, I found a black wristband that said WATCH FOR GOD. Since I was already thinking Advent, my brain put 2 & 2 together & said, what a theme for Advent!!!! Then the old brain took the next step & said, hey, we could wear these for Advent... but not black, in purple. Then, where can one order wristbands??? A Google search later, for \$0.22 each, I'd ordered them, WATCH FOR GOD in purple.

Ta da! Here they are. A spiritual discipline for Advent, easy but meaningful. A way to be watching for God in the middle of everything. I tried it out with the black wristband. Let me tell

you how it went.. ..it caught my eye off and on during the day, and I smiled, and looked around for something that would remind me that God was here.

Because you know what? God is actually already here - inside, outside, all around, over, under, in front, behind, and inside. Evidently according to our holy writings, something different will happen in the future...but right now, God is here - - IF, and that's a big IF - - our eyes are open. No, the world isn't made new and perfect yet, like the visions of our faith ancestors. However, what did Jesus say? The kingdom of God is AT HAND, AT THE DOOR. and God can show up for us in surprising ways, like in Jesus.

SOOOOO - what are some times & places we can watch for God? Let's see.....

We can watch for God when we put the wristband on in the morning - there in our room in our house or apartment, standing in front of the mirror. We might glimpse the wristband again while our hands are up brushing our teeth. Again, when we're fixing our hair or putting on earrings.

We might see the wristband when we're eating breakfast, lifting that spoon or fork to our mouths. We might catch a look at that wristband when our hands are on the steering wheel in the car.

Each time we see it, and are aware of it on our wrist, it reminds us to look around RIGHT THEN and look for where God is - because God is there. God is in God's own creation, the trees outside the windows, the birds, the wind, the wood of our table, the water that flows, our family member nearby, our cat (or dog)....wherever life is, God is. And of course God is inside us, too. God created that hand that's lifting the cereal spoon, and the grains of rice or wheat that make up your cereal, and the cow that gave the milk. God created that chicken that laid your egg, and that pig that supplied your bacon.

I don't see it too much around here, but there are some corners I go by from my house to about anywhere in Syracuse, where people are begging by stop lights. God loves them, too, and their life is special to God. The wristband strengthened my thoughts about these people - I try and carry string cheese in my purse, and give it out - good nutrition, protein.

Through the day, we might glance at the wrist band right there at our desk at work, with our hands out in front of us typing at our computer, taking notes in class, loading our bookbag to move to the next place.. Watch for God - God is at your workplace, too. Putting on my coat, and putting my hand down the sleeve, the wrist=band might catch on the fabric, and remind me to watch for God. Getting a plate out of the cupboard, putting my dinner in a pan or a microwave, that band in there reminding me to watch for God. Rinsing my dishes before putting them in the dishwasher, there it is. Thank you God, for my food.

We might take it off for a shower, but we read it's words as we do. Watch for God. When we reach out to hug our kids or our partner, there's those words again - Watch For God. Taking the dog for the nightly walk, the cat jumping up in your lap in the recliner - WATCH FOR GOD.

So the wristband works as a kind of all-day reminder of God's presence in all that is around us, all that is in us. God is not absent just because our brains go off on tangents and concentrate on assignments or chores or work we have to do. God is always present. We just forget sometimes.

Advent is a time of preparation, so it's a good time to take on a simple spiritual practice of awareness of God's presence. I think these things were like \$0.22 each.....and what they can help us learn and observe is invaluable. All kinds of unexpected insights might come - we might appreciate nature in a new way instead of looking past it on our way to somewhere else - Busy, busy, busy. It only takes a moment to bring back to mind that God is here, but it can change our attitude and outlook.

God is present when I'm helping a customer find the right color blouse, or a good tie; God is present when I am sticking stamps on Christmas cards. God is near me when I am merging onto the freeway. Help me here - I'm trying to think of things I do daily - what else do you do daily that seems so ordinary, but that God is there? Paying bills. Figuring out medicare. Sitting at a doctor's office. Running to Wegmans.

There is not a time or place where God is absent. God is here - it's our awareness of that which is lacking. This ADVENT, prepare for Christmas in a different way - start practicing the presence of God with the help of this little wristband. I'm going to go out on a limb here and expect some stories next Sunday, stories of when God's presence caught you by surprise. Stories of little times when that wristband brought your mind back to God. Be ready to share some experiences of wearing this thing daily for ADVENT. And remember who and what this celebration is about. AMEN.