

R A N S ⊕ M E D  
H E A R T  
m i n i s t r i e s

December 2006

Dearest Friends,

Advent season is upon us. (How did *that* happen? What happened to the fall?) Ready or not, December is here. It really can be a beautiful time of year, spiritually speaking, if we don't let the madness of the world crowd the Spirit out. With that hope in mind, let me offer a few thoughts about what Advent might mean for us.

Advent means "coming." To celebrate Advent means to celebrate God keeping his promise. He came. Just as he said he would. For thousands of years God promised his people that he would come and rescue them. He promised it in the Garden, and kept promising it all through the Old Testament. It was a long time to wait, from their point of view. But he *did* come, as Jesus of Nazareth. God came, and rescued us, and brought us to his heart, to be his own forever. It's good to stop and remember. He kept his promise. He came. We can trust him.

We need this season to remember God came because so much of life seems to shout at us, "He's not coming now. Not in *this*. You are on your own." Doesn't it? I mean, my personal crises of faith are in the here and now. Yes, I know God has come through for me in the past. But for some reason, doubt and fear rush in with the next crisis. Will he come *now*? In *this*? That is where Advent can help us. We look at the evidence: God keeps his word. *He came. He can be trusted.* Whatever the evidence of the moment seems to say, God promises never to leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5, which is best understood in the light of Joshua 1:1-9).

So we can say to ourselves, *This moment is no exception. God came for me. He will come for me now.*

But there is even more to Advent. Not only is it an opportunity to reflect – for several weeks – on the fact that *God came*, it is also an opportunity to lift our eyes towards his return. He will come again. This story is rapidly moving towards a climax, when Jesus returns in bodily form, mounted on a white horse, to usher in the Kingdom of God. There is a Second Advent we are waiting for. Thus in many churches the "Mystery of Faith" is pronounced every week:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

He *will* come again. I don't know when and I won't speculate on that in this letter, but notice that the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, seems to imply that Christ will return when the church is thirsty for him:

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come!” and let him who hears say, “Come!” whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (22:17)

There is a chorus going up here, a one-word cry of the heart: *Come!* Reading this last Christmas, and reflecting on the Second Coming, it struck me that I hardly ever – have I ever? – prayed for Jesus to come back. And why is that? Is it not because I’m so wrapped up in praying for today? But here is the cry of the longing church: “*Come!*” Come back, Jesus. Come back. It’s just beautiful.

And as I reflected on this, I realized my heart *does* long for him to return. Very much. And so I have begun to add my voice to what I hope is a chorus of voices in the spirit of Rev 22:17. I have been praying, *Come back, Lord Jesus. Come back. Soon. We need you desperately.* I’ll look out the window, towards the eastern horizon, and whisper a simple prayer. *Come.*

So Advent can be for us a time of reassurance, and a time of longing and hope. Reassurance because God comes. He doesn’t abandon us. Not now. Not ever. It can be a time of hope and longing when we say to ourselves, *And he is coming back. And all shall be well.* Jesus is going to come back. This will help us feel the longing of our hearts, and join the thirsty Bride in asking him to. *O Jesus, come back. Come back. We need you.*

I do pray this is a wonderful season for you with God. Whatever else may be going on – dreams realized, dreams seemingly lost – we have God. We have his word that he will come for us.

Thank you, dear friends, for all your love and support of us this year. God is doing more beautiful things through Ransomed Heart than I ever thought possible, as he comes for the hearts of his people. It is breathtaking. And I couldn’t close out the year without saying thank you – for your prayers, your words of encouragement, for fighting with us and for us, and for your support. We love you and thank God for you.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John".

John, for all of us.

PS Every cause seems to put on the heavy plea at the end of the year for support, and I’m not going to join that chorus. I’ll trust God to put on your heart what he’d have you do. And if you are so moved, that’s what the envelope is for. (In case you didn’t know!). Regardless, we know you are for us.