

**November 28, 2021**  
**First Sunday of Advent**

**Meditation:** “Interrupt.....”

The other day I was talking with someone and the topic of social etiquette came up. We lamented the waning of etiquette in daily life. One topic that my friend brought up was that of interrupting others while speaking. An interruption is one of the rudest things that can happen to us, and little else upsets us more than someone who constantly interrupts. An interruption says that the person interrupting believes that they are more important or have something more important to say than the person or conversation that is being interrupted. While that is right, as far as it goes, I think there is more going on than that.

In more general terms, not just an interruption in a conversation, but situations that interrupt the flow of daily life bother us. Take, for example when you are living your life according to plan. You have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, you get married, your careers are progressing, you are planning on buying your first home, and boom, you find out that you are going to have a baby. I'm not talking about a planned birth, but an unexpected one. You were using birth control because you weren't ready for a baby, and one is coming anyway. It's an interruption that upsets your plan for your life. Or, you have a career and things are going well. You are looking forward to a promotion and the boss call you into the office and tells you that the company has been bought and you are no longer required. Another interruption that completely upsets the plan you have laid out for your life. Why do these types of interruptions bother us? Because they disrupt the plan or the rules by which we live.

Etiquette is a set of rules that creates an orderly flow of social interaction. The plans we make for our lives, likewise create an orderly path for us to follow. Rules and plans create predictability for us. They help us know what to expect next, and that gives us a sense of security and comfort and control over life. Interruptions disrupt all of that. Interruptions are unpredictable and remove our sense of control and our sense of security. The disruption doesn't have to be cataclysmic like a pandemic or a tornado or a flood, it just has to disrupt what we expected next, like the doorbell ringing when we are trying to get supper ready, although the two are on completely different scales. Naturally we would be much more upset with losing our job than with the phone ringing at two in the morning.

There are interruptions that bother us, like those already mentioned, but there are also times when an interruption would be welcome. When you are doing something that you really don't like doing, like vacuuming the house, and a friend calls and suggests you meet for a coffee, that would be a welcome interruption. Or, if you are in a crisis, you are deep in debt and trying to figure out how you are going to pay the next bill that is past due and you

pick up the mail and you receive an unexpected inheritance from a friend who has recently died. That too would be a welcome interruption.

Or how about this one. The world seems to have gone berserk. People do not treat one another with respect. Greed seems to be ruling the lives of many. There are natural disasters, plagues, famines, acts of terrorism and wars...sort of sounds like 2021, doesn't it. Many don't have access to the minimum daily requirements to support life. In other words, the world is going down the drain, quickly, and there is nothing that you, as an individual, or we, as a group, can do about it. The only way to stop the mad dash for wealth and the suffering it creates for many, seems to be a divine interruption. That is what Advent is about. Advent is an interruption in the frenzy of consumerist Christmas. It is a hold on the non-stop Christmas music (including Christmas carols), shopping, cooking, eating, parties, and ... you get the idea.

The season of Advent is about waiting and watching for the God who loves us so much that God is unwilling to leave us forever to our own devices. Advent, which means arrival, is about God interrupting the flow of human history in order to intervene. We live in a world where the problems are larger than our collective resources for addressing them. We can't reverse climate change. We can't reverse the effects of pollution in our water and in the soil. We can't reverse the effects of rural depopulation. Perhaps you didn't know: over half of the population of the world now lives in cities. The rural way of life is dying all over the world. Why, we can't even figure out a way to distribute the food that we grow so that everyone has enough to eat, or how to live in harmony with one another. We need God to interrupt, to disrupt the future, to turn everything upside down, or, at the very least, to disrupt the way we are living and our thinking. The most important message of Advent is not simply that God loves us, but that God comes to us. God came to us, broke into time and space, in the person of Jesus, who was born in that stable on the outskirts of Bethlehem all those years ago. More importantly, God continues to move, to act, to create, and to recreate, and God comes to us again. That is the message of today's gospel, and for that matter all of the biblical texts for the season of Advent: God loves us enough to interrupt us. When we are busy with the stuff of our lives, when we have accommodated ourselves to the injustices, problems and worries of our world, in a time and a place and a way we least expect, God comes.

So, do not let your hearts be weighed down with the worries of this world, rather be on the watch for the advent, for the arrival of, God. When things seem hopeless, God is nearby and your redemption draws near.