

Advent 1 Year C  
Dec. 1, 2019  
St. James, Wheat Ridge

By the Rev. Becky Jones

It was just so cozy and comfortable.  
The music was playing softly.  
There was a fire in the fireplace.  
It had been such a pleasant evening.  
Lucy was being lulled into sleep.

Suddenly, she jumped up,  
Remembering that her brothers and sister  
Would be worried about her.  
And when she woke up, she discovered the faun, Mr. Tumnus,  
Was very upset.

It was Mr. Tumnus who had lulled her to sleep on purpose.  
You see, he worked for the White Witch,  
And he'd agreed that if he ever met a human child  
Visiting the land of Narnia,  
He would catch it, and hand it over to the witch,  
Who was very fearful of what the coming of human children  
Might mean for her reign of tyranny.  
She surely would have killed Lucy.  
Mr. Tumnus had come this close to betraying his new friend.  
But his conscience was troubling him.

Now maybe, he would have made the decision on his own,  
To do what was right,  
And not let Lucy fall into the clutches of the witch.  
Maybe.

Even so, I think it's a good thing  
That Lucy woke up when she did.  
She needed to be ready for action,  
Not drowsing by the fire.  
She needed to be awake and alert,  
So she could remind Mr. Tumnus  
That he is a good faun, not a bad faun,

And that he must not turn her over to the witch.

I don't know if C.S. Lewis had this morning's gospel lesson in mind  
 When he wrote the scene in Mr. Tumnus's house  
 In "*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.*"  
 But it seems to me that it pretty well illustrates  
 What our Lord was talking about  
 When he said "Keep awake."  
 "You must be ready,  
 for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Or maybe, Lewis had in mind  
 The Apostle Paul's admonition to the Romans,  
 That NOW is the moment to wake from sleep.  
 Don't delay.  
 Open your eyes right now,  
 While there is still time.

Both Jesus and Paul are reminding us  
 Of the importance of being ready for God's coming.  
 This is what Advent is all about.  
 Advent, it turns out, is NOT  
 A countdown of shopping days until Christmas,  
 But is a reminder to prepare ourselves,  
 To train our spirits for God's arrival.

Our Christian tradition recognizes  
 That God HAS come, and WILL come,  
 And IS here even as we speak.  
 It's something that can be hard to wrap your mind around.

The first coming was when God walked with us  
 As Jesus of Nazareth, born in a manger.  
 We will celebrate the anniversary of that first coming in a few weeks,  
 At the Feast of the Incarnation,  
 Otherwise known as Christmas.

Then there is the final coming,  
 Which Jesus makes mention of in today's gospel,  
 When God and Creation will at last be fully united,

And the Kingdom of God will be established.

It's a day when nations will beat their swords into ploughshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks,  
And war will be ended,  
And peace and justice will reign.  
We don't know when this will be.  
Even Jesus didn't know.  
But make no mistake:  
Heaven WILL come to earth at some point.

But in between the first coming and the final coming,  
There is another way we experience the coming of God.  
That is the daily visitation.  
It is God with us in our prayers,  
It is finding God in our neighbors,  
It is seeing God in those we are privileged to serve.

All of these are the Coming of the Day of the Lord.  
Each of them carries with it  
The overcoming of the old, established way of doing things,  
And ushering in the just and loving presence of God.  
And it is for this that we need to be ready.  
And to get ready, we first need to wake up.  
Many of us don't even realize that we've been lulled to sleep.

My friend Ruth tells the story of driving in a rental car  
through rural New York recently.  
While driving, she heard a small chime,  
And on the instrument panel,  
A coffee cup icon came up  
With the instruction, "Consider stopping for a break."  
She realized that something about her driving  
Translated as drowsiness to the automobile,  
Triggering the alert.

The disturbing thing about this  
Was that she hadn't even been aware  
that she was getting drowsy.  
She was so detached

from her own experience of driving  
 She didn't comprehend what was really happening.

I think much of the time, we all go through life that way.  
 We get detached, we're not paying attention,  
 We're just going through the motions,  
 Not realizing that we're being lulled into complacency.  
 And we've allowed it to happen.  
 Each of us needs to ask ourselves,  
 What have we given away that we need to reclaim?  
 What do we need to do  
 To recognize when we've allowed ourselves  
 To fall into a potentially dangerous or precarious situation?

In the *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*,  
 Lucy and Mr. Tumnus agree  
 That now that he's met her,  
 He can't possibly turn her over to the witch.  
 As the psalmist might have put it,  
 "Because of the House of the Lord,  
 I will seek to do you good."

And so, the two of them creep stealthily back through the woods,  
 Back to the lamp post,  
 Walking in the light of the Lord.  
 From there, Lucy knows the way home,  
 Back through the wardrobe.  
 I think the lesson for us as we enter the season of Advent  
 Is that the way that we will prepare ourselves  
 For the coming of our Lord  
 Is by opening ourselves to the reality of God's daily visitations.  
 By being alert for the presence of Christ  
 In the face of the stranger,  
 In the love of family and friends,  
 In the goodness of our daily lives.

And maybe it is by drawing apart for a little while,  
 Taking time to read scripture,  
 Taking time to pray,  
 Taking time for solitude with our Maker.

Taking time to breathe slowly,  
And let the promises of God fill our lungs.

And maybe we each could use a reminder  
That we are made for good, not bad,  
And we must try never to cooperate with evil,  
No matter how tempting,  
No matter how detached we may feel ourselves to be.

Maybe it's time to consider stopping for a break.  
Amen.