

Light the Light, the Fire of Life



For many in the free-church tradition, Advent is a foreign word, season, and concept. Even so, an increasing number of congregations are finding the exploration of the Church Year to be quite meaningful. Advent is a great place to begin such an exploration. Even the secular world prepares for Christmas. Here is a way to prepare in a way that is saturated with events and concepts from scripture.

Montoya does a delightful and very helpful job of combining the two most popular approaches to celebrating Advent via the Advent Candle. Each stanza begins with a Sunday emphasis based on the hope, peace, joy structure. But quickly, the prophets, angels, shepherd structure appears placing the two options in tandem.

Whatever approach to the Advent candles a particular congregation might choose, the fact is that Advent carries the burden that is part of this hymn. In hymnic structure the chorus is called a burden when it appears before the stanzas are sung. This hymn has a musical burden and a statement of Advent's functional burden...to light the light that reveals the glory of the Christ-child.

Each stanza ends with a reminder of why the Light was needed and why we are to be the light in the darkness that surrounds us. Be mindful of this as you end each stanza in your singing.

The gospel is a candle that is desperately needed in the darkness that exists in much of human society around the world. We who believe are to be salt...and light. We are to place on light on a hill, not under a basket. Advent is not the signal to start buying Christmas gifts. It is a reminder that the Jesus is the Light and we are "little Christs," Christians, whose task it is to glow the gospel.

"I can't do much" doesn't work as an excuse when the imagery given to us is a candle. But even a small source of light is a flame of hope in darkness. Candles, not search lights or spot lights, candles; that's the picture and the assignment...be a candle.

Christmas morning will gain spiritual significance, even for the longtime believer when it has been preceded by biblical anticipation. The Light we reflect is "the Fire of Life" for us as believers and for those who still walk in darkness.

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