

Year C\* Advent 1\*2006\* Every Conceivable Circumstance  
Rough Draft

Zechariah is imagining something big. Valleys are splitting. Hills are rushing apart. Water is gushing out from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. And the LORD is becoming king of all the world. Luke is imagining something even bigger. The sun and moon and even the stars are distressed. The whole cosmos is groaning in some sort of shaking. "But", Jesus says, "Stand up, raise up your heads, your redemption is drawing near."

Welcome to Advent. The season of shaking earth, distressed stars, and the coming of the LORD.

So, how was your week?  
Was there shaking?  
Was there distress?  
Did the Lord come?

I imagine on our own scales the answer is "yes".  
I imagine we all felt fear at some point this week.  
I imagine our worlds were shook a bit, or maybe a lot.  
I imagine in the midst of some distress we prayed and we were helped by our prayer, and in that, the Lord came to us.

The great thing about the biblical story is that it is almost always true on some level.  
The great apocalyptic images of Zechariah and Luke may never come to pass in some literal historical way, or maybe they will, who can tell. But they speak of realities we all know in our real lived lives.

We all know what it is to have our foundations shaken in small and great ways.  
Some deadline is approaching.  
Some news arrives .  
Some new adventure you're not quite ready for is upon you.  
Maybe life has come to you and said; time to grow up,  
time to get sober,  
time to have some fun,

live a little,

time to grieve,  
time to go.

To me the underlying dream of all the sacred scriptures is this; the mystery of God is with us every step of the way. Every circumstance, every conceivable circumstance, can be faced, even embraced, for God is in it.

Our outward senses and our emotions may feel abandoned by God just as Jesus felt abandoned by God on the cross, but there is something deeper than our emotions and our outward senses. There's some secret place in us that no one can touch. To our dying day we will know God with us in that place.

No circumstance, however terrible and frightening can remove or replace God within us. And there are so many terrible circumstances in the world.

I wonder how today's readings sound to a patrol of soldiers preparing to make a sweep of some neighbor in Baghdad.  
**People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world.**

Or how would it read in a Palestinian refugee camp?  
Or in a hospital ICU waiting room.

I wonder what Al Gore thinks of this reading this morning or any person who is convinced that global warming is a clear and present danger. **There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.**

I wonder what President Bush would make of this reading today?  
What of the people in the Darfur (sp?) region, in Lebanon, in Palestine?

But we needn't leave our parish family. Today we pray for the repose of the body and soul of Kathryn Lawrence the oldest member of our parish family who died yesterday afternoon. And

though Kathryn's death was a holy death it still is a wonder that we are here then we are gone. Please keep Pam Beach and her family in your prayers. Pam supplies our wreaths for our annual wreath sale in memory of Abel Pitts. Pam Beach's son-in-law died tragically this week.

Crises reaches every one of us.  
Crises in health.  
Crises in growth.  
Crises in the environment.  
Crises of faith.  
Crises in relationships.

Crises on the micro level of our little lives.  
Crises on the macro level of nation, world, cosmos.

But, Jesus says, when this happens, **“Stand up, raise up your heads, your redemption is drawing near.”**  
Every circumstance, every conceivable circumstance, can be faced, even embraced, for God is in it.

I wrote a poem about some circumstances it has been difficult for me to see God in. They are all circumstances that we have faced as a parish family.

Alex's Death

My little boy got sick.  
He was 8.  
I was 39.  
And I learned the stone cold obscene fear of losing what I love.  
I carried a towel at all times to bury my face.

That was ten years ago.

Now he is 18.  
I am 49.  
I have let him go into his life and his death and I am not afraid.

I am not afraid of anyone's death.

Not afraid of Abel's November death among the fallen leaves.

Not afraid of Samantha's death during her late morning nap.

Not afraid of Jack's death alone on the floor of their newly bought condo.

It is okay to die,  
when we die,  
the way we die.

It will be okay.

Can you imagine not hiding from death?

Not cowering before the ending of a relationship?

Can you imagine embracing a great and maybe terrible change  
that is coming upon us?

Zechariah can. Luke can. They say, "Every circumstance, every  
conceivable circumstance, can be faced, even embraced, for  
God is in it."

God is in the birth and growth of our little ones.

God is in the death of our loved ones.

God is with us when we leave home and when we come home.

God is in the chaos of Iraq.

God is in the boring peace of Blowing Rock.

God is in the degradation of the environment as surely as he (sic) is  
in its beauty.

God will be in the mountains when they split in two.

God will be in the moon and the sun and the stars when they are  
distressed.

God will be with you.

God will be with me.

Every circumstance, every conceivable circumstance, can be

faced, even embraced, for God is in it.