

November 30, 2008
Advent 1
FCMF #1

“Where are You God!?”

Why don't you tear the sky open and come down?

The mountains would see you and shake with fear.

They would tremble like water boiling over a hot fire.

Come and reveal your power to your enemies

and make the nations tremble at your presence!

There was a time when you came and did terrifying things

that we did not expect; the mountains saw you and shook with fear.

No one has ever seen or heard of a God like you

and who does such deeds for those who put their hope in him....

But you are our father, Lord.

We are the clay, and you are like the potter.

You created us, so do not be too angry with us

or hold our sins against us forever. (Is. 64: 1-4 & 8 Good News)

So welcome to advent!

Joy to the world, come oh come Emmanuel,

Gloria in excelsis Deo, and choruses of Alleluia and Amen!

And yet I also resonate with this passage!

I don't know about you, but I've been there, in a place,

longing for hope- yet living in darkness?

Where are you God! What's taking you so long!

Why, just when I need you the most, you seem to be in hiding!

Show your face! Come on down!

Just where the **** are you!

Can't you see I am at the end of my rope?

come and save me before its too late!

Split open, skies- burst forth with thunder and lightning

shake the earth and rend the heavens

eclipse sun and moon and hurtle the stars from the sky!

Now God, not later! Now!

Its Go time God!

Time to put up or shut up!

Hmm... but wait a minute... just a minute...

...do I really understand what it is that I am asking for?

Do I really want, can I really handle this kind of God!

Do we really mean it? Or are we normally saying,

“Come oh God and shake things up! But not too much.”

Come, yes come and comfort me but don't change me.”

In this passage Isaiah gives us two powerful images of God.

Two seemingly contradictory images.

But very key images we must try to understand.

Mark also picks up on these.

One is a God of thunder, lightning, and earthquakes

of comets crashing and solar eclipses!

A God that manipulates all earthly and celestial forces!

And yet the passage ends with another picture of God,

a parent who is also a potter,

a potter, bent over, lovingly caressing us, the clay.

Both are images of great power and drama!

and they are also images of comfort and fear.

They are both good and necessary for a complete picture.

But the fear that I am referring to is

not the fear elicited by a horror show or one that relies on violence.

Rather it is the overwhelming experience of being in the presence of love!

Remember the story of the disciples sailing across the lake?

They were suddenly caught in a great storm and about to perish?

And then Jesus came to them.

They had many fears that night,

The first was obvious- that they might drown.

But they were also scared of Jesus.

Initially they thought he was a ghost walking across the water.

Then they were afraid of what he did!

“What manner of man is this that the winds and waves obey him?”

Simultaneously came the feelings of relief, shock and awe.

It was a place in between, between running for your life

and a place, a sense that something truly amazing may happen.

Its a place of realization, a realization that I am so unworthy of rescue

and yet so cherished by the divine, that
my petty concerns are worthy of God's full intervention.

In his novel, "The Shack," William Young explores such an encounter

An encounter between hurting humanity and the Divine.

Don't worry I will not give away the ending...

... mostly because I'm only about 2/3 of the way through.

For those of you who may not be familiar with it...

According to the synopsis on the back...

Now Im not sure about those last two sentences?

I have yet to be so thoroughly transformed and

nor am I ready to place it in my list of must read books.

However, I would like to read a portion that seems to address today's topic.

"How can you say that with all the pain is this world...

"We're not justifying it. We are redeeming it."(pp 125-127)

"But in those days, after the tribulation,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give off her glow,

and the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly forces will be shaken!

And they will see the son of Adam coming on the clouds

with great power and splendor.

And then he will send out messengers and

will gather the chosen people from the four winds,

from the ends of the earth to the edge of the sky!
Take a cue from the fig tree.
When its branch is already in bud and leaves come out,
you know that summer is near.
So when you see these things take place,
you ought to realize that he is near, just outside your door. (vv 24-29)
As for the exact day or minute: no one knows,
not even heaven's messengers, nor even the son,
no one, except the Father. Be on guard! Stay alert! (vv 32& 33)

“But you are our parent (we call you papa and mama)...
We are like clay, and you are like the potter. You created us... (Is 64: 8)

So welcome to Advent.

A time of waiting and darkness,
a time of illumination and great anticipation
as we await the arrival of God,

The God of thunder and fire!

the God who is Emmanuel-

God with us in our joys as well as sorrows!

So we are back to our original question- where are you God?

And how will I recognize your arrival?

Will it be in the drama in the stars or in the upheavals on the earth?

And, if we are awake and attentive enough, we will see God,

In the bud of a tree ready to blossom!

As a potter bent over gently moulding the clay!

And in a baby, a defenseless child who comes to redeem it all!

So where is God in the midst of our darkness, loneliness and despair?

God is with us, God is with us!

God silent, caressing, defenseless, loving!

The face of God is coming and will shine upon us.

Shining brighter than a sunny day in the Rocky Mountains!

More dramatic than a thunder storm on the plains.

It is and will be; brilliant, shocking and totally awesome!

And God comes, not in anger to destroy- but to love!

God comes comes not to justify our pain or our loneliness or our suffering.

No God comes, comes to redeem it all!