

First Sunday of Advent
December 3, 2023
The Apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ
1 Corinthians 1:3-9

I like bow ties. There, I said it. There is no turning back now. And you should all know I have been criticized by people near and dear to me for engaging in said neckline accoutrement.

The criticisms go something like this! You can't wear a bow tie, only old Southern Democrats wear bowties. Or: the only people who should wear bowties are circus ringmasters or carnies. Or: if you want to wear a bowtie, you should probably pick up a monkey and an organ grinder to go with it. And the most insulting I have ever heard, albeit delivered innocently enough, was the day I was wearing my light grey suit with a red bowtie and someone remarked, "Hey, you look just like Pee Wee Herman!"

But I will not repent of this suggested cultural sin! I love my bowties. Ever since Lois Ford gave me my first School color bowtie and pocket kerchief combo, I was hooked.

They do not get in the way like a regular tie does. They are easier and quicker to tie than a regular tie. And I like how it draws everyone's attention in the room, even if it just draws criticism for wearing one.

Bowtie Tuesdays here I come. Ringmasters and carnies unite. We will not surrender this adornment to any political party. The bowtie belongs to everyone, and no one has a monopoly on its display around their neck. Now I just need to find some white patent leather shoes to go with my light grey suit and red bow tie.

You know, sometimes the culture tries to categorize certain things as only belonging in certain places, and we tend to go along with it passively, not even realizing it at the time. For example, certain clothes can only be worn by certain racial groups or you may be accused of cultural appropriation. Music is often attributed to only one particular race: R & B belongs to the black community, Country belongs to the white community, and Blue Grass belongs to hillbillies. Food is even divided on racial lines, whether it's Bar-B-Que, Soul Food, Mayonnaise, or even certain flavors of soda pop.

It all classifies us submissively. We don't even notice it until someone points it out because we just accept it as the way things are. "It is what it is", we say, and we don't give it another thought.

The title of the sermon is just such a subject in Christendom. I imagine when you heard the title or saw it on the screen you imagined a bit of doom and gloom didn't you? After all, when is an Apocalypse anything but doom and gloom in our culture's mind these days? It doesn't help that movies like *Apocalypse Now* had songs by *The Doors* singing those mournful lyrics in the background:

This is the end

Beautiful friend

This is the end

My only Friend, the end...

Or more recently, Mel Gibson's movie *Apocalypto* portrayed in graphic detail the end of entire tribal communities through human sacrifice. This was "key to the spiritual world of the Mexica people in the 14th-16th centuries."

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/06/feeding-gods-hundreds-skulls-reveal-massive-scale-human-sacrifice-aztec-capital>

So the evolution of Apocalypse in our culture as doom and gloom has some significant theatrical foundation. Unfortunately, it has even been co-opted by some Christians and used in end times books. These use the technique of scaring the Hell out of people hoping somehow that will get everyone to Heaven.

So, we see this in the movies, we see this in the popular "Left Behind" books, and we even hear it in some pulpits in some churches in the area. But we do not see it in the Bible, and today's lesson is the perfect example.

Just look over the text today. In verse 7, normally translated revelation, it is actually the Greek word

Ἀποκάλυψιν

or *The "Apocalypse" of our Lord Jesus Christ* which shows no doom or gloom for God's people. Rather, it shows the riches of life eternal, security found nowhere else, gifts in

abundance, and an intensity of expectation that is awe-inspiring with its possibilities for all human kind.

As we anticipate the faithful return and revelation of our Lord Jesus in this season of the Advent of our God, He has indeed given us all wisdom and knowledge for seeing Him as He is. Through the amazing Words of Holy Scripture, handed down over thousands of years, we have a glimpse into the very mind of God to guide us: in our decisions over right and wrong, helping us manage our lives the best way possible, and drawing us closer to Him every time we devote ourselves to His precious text.

The security that we have nowhere else is the verifiable, legally guaranteed forgiveness of our sins. Won by the child, who came in the most humble of ways to remove our sins by willingly dying for them on the cross in our place. If ever there was a legal release from obligation, this is it! If ever there was a pardon for sins, Jesus paid for it. If ever there was a “get out of Sheol free” card, Jesus dealt it from the top of the deck right into our hands with His very Body and Blood. Then we lack in no gifts whatsoever!

We have everything from God given out of Grace, empowered though the church, because of God and our Risen Lord Jesus. This means whatever we need to run the church, proclaim the Gospel, administer the school, bake the cookies, visit the sick and shut-in, reach the unchurched, help the disenfranchised and lift up the poor, is already in our spiritual bank of Christ. It is just waiting to be spent by those who believe He placed those gifts there for us to use in His kingdom.

Finally, we have the eager anticipation for the apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can't wait for it to come to fruition. We wake up every day wondering as we watch the headlines, is it now Lord? We wait intensely but patiently, because we know Jesus has been apocalypsed/revealed before and He will be apocalypsed again.

I have heard that there are some kids that find the arrival of Santa Claus very scary during Christmas. Obviously, this is an anomaly. But, if he is not explained properly and the child is just immature enough to not understand, you can just imagine how frightening Santa might be. Just imagine, a man coming in the dark of night and there is no way to keep him out of your house. Now imagine that he has the demi-god ability to see everything you do all the time, even when you are sleeping! And imagine that he is keeping a list of everything you do, and determines if you are naughty or nice. He is like an unfeeling, sneering overlord who cares

little for the circumstances that may have caused your ill behavior to begin with. Santa seems a lot more like Satan to that little kid than Jolly old St. Nicholas.

But then, we as a community explain the details, and show him or her the joy of the season, rather than the miserable misunderstanding they concocted. The Eve of Christmas Day becomes that joyful moment in time that they can eagerly anticipate as the arrival of a good day full of good things for them!

That is the true spirit of the Apocalypse of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is not a horrifying day. It is an amazing day, when all that is good will be restored and the real good life begins. This is the message we have to give our otherwise uninformed friends. This is the gift that keeps on giving in this confused and mixed-up world. This is the joy in Jesus we have always had and want everyone to have.

The Apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Advent of our God, as we eagerly anticipate His return and celebrate when He came as the Babe of Bethlehem.
AMEN.

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