



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week

Advent of Conspiracy

We have been conspired against!!! The world says its party time – and we've never been adverse to parties! The world says, drown yourself in good things – you deserve it! The world says you have blessings galore – in the old puritan “wisdom” this means you are loved by God – enjoy.

You know, that's hard to say no to. God has given us this world to enjoy. Creation is there and it is so good. We have been blessed with goods and good folk around us and in our families so much that in these holiday times we want to say “thanks” to all of them for being a part of our lives. OK. But it is NOT party time except “happy birthday Jesus” time. This is the time of the year when, as Christians, we celebrate the beginning of the “new” cycle of creation. God has come to us in a new way, a miracle way, a strange and fulfilling way. This Advent, the waiting time, is when we prepare for the big birthday.

How do we do that? Well, in this congregation we eat! But with our eating we also worship and begin the prayer life we should maintain all year. It is a time for us to come, again, to remember what and who our faith is in. This is the time of the liturgical year when we begin to wrap the gift of Christ for the world.

Yes, we will party. For birthdays, that's to be expected. Yes, we will get and give gifts for that is one way to show love to those around us and those who are in need of knowing that they are loved and cared for by others. Yes, we will pray, because that's just a part of our lives!

But we must always remember the conspiracy. There are those who have turned this in a winter holiday. Particularly “up north” the dark, cold days of winter need something to life the spirits of those who are not as lucky as we are weather-wise! But Christmas is not all Santa Claus as the conspirators would

like us to believe. Christmas is angels and shepherds and mangers and stars and wise men. Advent is the anticipation of all those things and helping the excitement of children turn in the right direction.

This is Advent One – there is still a while before “the big day” and it will be difficult to fight the conspiracy of the world. But work at it. We can do it. We can help children rejoice in anticipation. We can help the world know that Advent, a time anticipation, is a time of growth spiritually and in fellowship. Even as some Christians take this time just to “extend” Christmas celebrations, let’s take this time to become buried in the wonder of anticipation – always keeping the manger in front of us. Think like the wonderful Advent calendars – one blessing a day until the final day of revelation.

We all have traditions that come from our families. I’ll play Swedish Christmas songs during this time. Some of you have recipes that take a lot of doing but they have been done in your family for generations and you are not about to stop it. Some of you will spend more time helping in the community or finding families you feel could use some extra help as heating bills rise and blankets become scarce. Whatever your family and community traditions are, remember, Christ is coming. Don’t let the conspiracy get you!

TMK

-- Week of November 29, 2009