

Toetrede

Liturgie van die Lig

Advent is the season of waiting: of promise and patience, of presence and absence, of fullness and emptiness. The seed has been planted but the growth is invisible and fragile. In the midst of the growth process, threats abound. Will the seed burst forth into the sunlight? Will thorns choke its life and stunt its growth? Will it receive adequate nourishment to grow into a great tree, giving shelter and fruit for all around? Will we and our congregations survive – and better yet flourish – amid the white water rapids of today's religious pluralism and postmodernism? (PaF)

Woorddiens

Lesing 1: Jesaja 64:1-12 (1953)

¹ AG, as U maar die hemele wou skeur, wou neerdaal, dat die berge wankel voor u aangesig

² — soos vuur die houtjies aan die brand steek, vuur die water laat opborrel — om u Naam aan u teëstanders bekend te maak, sodat nasies voor u aangesig kan bewe

³ wanneer U vreeslike dinge doen waar ons nie op gehoop het nie — as U maar wou neerdaal, sodat die berge wankel voor u aangesig!

⁴ Van ouds af tog het niemand dit gehoor of verneem nie, geen oog het 'n God gesien wat werksaam is vir wie op Hom wag nie, behalwe U.

⁵ U kom hom tegemoet wat met vreugde geregtigheid beoefen, hulle wat aan U dink op u weë. Kyk, U was toornig, en ons het gesondig; in dié toestand was ons baie lank, en — sal ons verlos word?

⁶ En ons het almal geword soos 'n onreine, en al ons geregtighede soos 'n besoedelde kleed; en ons het almal verdor soos blare, en ons ongeregtighede het ons weggevoer soos die wind.

⁷ En daar was niemand wat u Naam aangeriep het, wat hom beywer het om U aan te kleef nie; want U het u aangesig vir ons verberg en laat ons wegs�melt deur ons ongeregtighede.

⁸ Maar nou, HERE, U is ons Vader; ons is die klei, en U is ons Formeerder, en ons almal is die werk van u hand.

⁹ HERE, wees nie uitermate toornig nie, en dink nie vir ewig aan die ongeregtigheid nie; aanskou dit tog dat ons almal u volk is.

¹⁰ U heilige stede het 'n woestyn geword; Sion het 'n woestyn geword, Jerusalem 'n wildernis.

¹¹ Ons heilige en heerlike huis waar ons vaders U geloof het, is met vuur verbrand, en al wat vir ons dierbaar was, het 'n puinhoop geword.

¹² HERE, sal U by hierdie dinge U bedwing? Sal U swyg en ons uitermate verdruk?

Broodjies vir die Pad

Place nothing before Christ, because he has placed nothing before you.

~ Cyprian (third century)



Advent is filled with hope, but not certainty. If God is omnipresent, God is frustratingly subtle, barely recognizable in our world unless we awaken to God's movements insinuated in the plethora of personal and corporate activities. (PaF)



I read Isaiah's words as an existential confession rather than a theological treatise. It feels to Isaiah like our pain must be God's doing: God must be punishing us, withdrawing God's presence, because we have gone astray. God is angry at us and God's anger takes the form of apparent abandonment. Isaiah and his community are going through a severe case of "separation anxiety," assuming that God's distance, which allows for freedom and creativity, is tantamount to God's abandonment and anger. Perhaps, as later Jewish mysticism suggests, God must withdraw for creation to burst forth in creativity and freedom. God does not overfunction or micromanage, despite God's moment by moment presence in our lives. There is risk in God's withdrawal – we may fear that God is gone forever and may also misuse our freedom, but the emergence of new possibilities demands that God give us space for growth. (PaF)



Fulfillment may always be a receding horizon. The heavens may not be torn open, but the daylight may slowly emerge. In the midst of waiting for a revelation that is beyond our understanding and exceeds our imagination, we have much to do. We are called to stay awake and choose to be people of a future which we can't fully fathom, a future of holy relationships, healed persons, and transformed ecology and economy. We can be citizens of the emerging realm of God right now. We don't need angelic visitors or natural disasters to know what time it is – for it is always God's time and the advent of life-transforming possibility. Open to possibility, we can sing "O Come, O Come" with the lively spirit of "Joy to the World" for God is here! (PaF)



Like some mighty double fugue, the scriptures weave together two dominant melodies and improvise on them endlessly: human-made time -- hour, day, week, month year, era, a single life-time-- juxtaposed with God's "time," which is always an EVENT-- an irruption/disruption/course correction/revelation/fresh start. John Caputo considers both of these senses of "time," when he writes: "The time of the world is the sort of time that you can count, the time you can count on, the sort that economics depends upon; it is regular and reliable enough for us to calculate.... Ticktock, ticktock." (The Weakness of God: A Theology of

Event, p. 162) By contrast, Caputo continues: "The coming of the kingdom is not a matter of prediction or prophesying some coming event off in a dark and unknown future." Rather: "The kingdom is already in us and something we are already in. The time of the kingdom is today, now, already." "God rules now, in Jesus, who says that the kingdom is upon us." (p.167) (SacraC)



What is God planning as our final destiny? Many fear that in the next life God will somehow take us over and remove from us our freedom to be ourselves. But what God is about is not our submission but our freedom, a gift we rightly value so much. God is free, and invites us to be free. Parents, at their best, want their children to mature into fully free persons; likewise God desires this for us.

Freedom is not simply the capacity to do nothing, or to be selfish. To be truly free is to be able to express our potential fully and appropriately. And that is the freedom that Jesus brings. The New Testament is full of it. Jesus proclaims freedom for captives and the oppressed (Luke 4:18). Paul asserts: 'For freedom Christ has set us free!' (Galatians 5:1). The story of salvation is all about liberation from the various traps of political slavery, sin, law and death, that inhibit God's people from living life to the full. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2 Corinthians 3:17). Freedom is God's goal for us. One great theologian, Balthasar, remarks that when God says, 'Be holy as I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16) this means 'Be free as I am free.'

This can help to dispel our fear that God is out to limit our autonomy. God is not a dominating God, but rather wants to make us 'fully alive' as St Irenaeus said long ago, in loving friendship with God and with one another. (SacraC)

Brood vir die Pad

Koggelmander teen eensaamheid

deur Wilhelm Jordaan

Op baie maniere is die menslike praatbedryf 'n kletserige kakofonie van klank. Soos dit byvoorbeeld hekelend vertel word in die Franse skrywer Georges Duhamel se verbeeldingsreis na die raserige koninkryk van Auspasië. Praatlus is die belangrikste eienskap van dié land se inwoners.

Daagliks word onophoudelik vergaderings gehou waartydens meesters van die retoriek die aanwesiges opsweep tot stryende, opponerende faksies.

Omdat spraak belangriker as denke is, word die toesprake nooit voorberei nie, want niemand stel belang in wat gesê word nie. Solank die spraakorgane beweeg, is Auspasië se inwoners tevrede, terwyl die rondreisende professionele pratery skatryk word.

Klink al te veel na die werklikheid.

So bekyk, lyk dit wenslik om min te sê. Want 'n mens weet goed die be- weeglike menslike tong – die "klein koggelmander agter die lippe" à la die digter Pirow Bekker – besit groot vernietigingskrag: Om konflik te verhoog, eensaamheid te verdiep en om tussenmenslike ontmoeting ongedaan te maak.

Om egter "nee" te sê vir praat, is om te vergeet spraak is oplaas die belangrikste menslike beweging; dat die blitsige klein koggelmander tog 'n konstruktiewe werktuig kan wees. Soos om eensaamheid te besweer.

Die Duitse skrywer Thomas Mann sê in Der Zauberberg spraak is opsigself beskawing. Hy reken die menslike woord, selfs die mees weersprekende woord, is die bewaarder van kontak tussen mense. Dit is swye en stilte wat mense van mekaar isoleer en vervreem.

So gesien, getuig praat van die mens se wil tot dialoog. Maar dié wil eis minstens drie ander dinge; anders is dialoog praatjies vir die vaak: Allereers dat dié wat praat mekaar werklik in die oë sien. In dié sigbaar wees van die een vir die ander lê die diepste betekenis van die mens se "gesigsvermoë" – dat jy wegdraai van die self om die ander raak te sien.

Mense wat só sigbaar word vir mekaar begryp dat taal, soos die Nederlandse digter Martinus Nijhoff sê, 'n verstandhouding is wat gaan van hart tot hart. Hulle wat spreek, gee hul hart.

Dan is my praat met jou ter wille van jou en my luister na jou is ter wille van myself. My luister na jou, met toegespitste aandag, is 'n geskenk wat ek aan jou gee. Dit gebeur in 'n veilige ruimte van wedersydse plek maak vir en ontdekking van mekaar. Ongeveer so: Grammatikaal beklee ek / in die kategorie van persoon / eerste plek / jy nommer twee / maar ons sou wel kon baat / as ek en jy / beurtelings hul plek verlaat / sodat ek en jy / plek kan maak / vir ons / albei.

'n Derde kenmerk van die wil tot dialoog is dat praat en luister geskied met die oog op onderlinge bystand en hulpverlening: om na mekaar om te sien, te ondersteun, te troos, te beskerm, regverdig te verdedig en feilloos te vermaan.

Sonder dié bestanddele van die wil tot dialoog ontaard praat-met-mekaar in wesenlik leë monoloë; word mense gereduseer tot stemwerpers wat beurtelings hul woorde na mekaar versend volgens die reëls van hoflikheid.

Dan beteken "dialoog" dít: Ek hoor jou stem en sien jou mond en lippe beweeg, maar terwyl jy praat, dink ek saggies by myself wat ek gaan sê (hoe ek jou gaan kritiseer/bykom/troef/terugkry/teëpraat) sodra ék jou stil kan kry of 'n gaping kan neem. Waar "dialoog" so verloop, word waar wat die Franse skrywer Jean-Paul Sartre beskryf het as die mens se eiesoortige hel op aarde: Die feit dat ons met mekaar moet saamleef en klaarkom terwyl ons eintlik volstrekt eensaam is en vreemdelinge vir mekaar bly – ingeperk soos in 'n huis met geslote deure.

Wegsending

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