May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

“*In those days*…” So begins our entry into the Season of Advent. Advent is not just a liturgical season of the church year. It is a reality of life. It happens in all sorts of ways. It comes at various points in life, not just the four or five weeks before Christmas. “*In those days … the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken*.” These are Jesus words to his disciples. The disciples have been admiring the temple and the large stones. They are impressed. Jesus, however, is telling them that change is coming. The temple of their life is coming down.

You probably know about “*those days”* when we all are experiencing significant changes in our lives during this Covid-19 virus.” You know about Advent. You know what it is like to enter the darkness of change. All change, whether welcome or unwanted, brings some kind of loss. It may be the loss of a relationship, the loss of a loved one, the loss of what is comfortable, familiar, safe.

The Advents of our lives set before us important questions. How will we find our way forward when the usual lights that illumined our path no longer shine? What do we do when it feels as if our world is falling apart? Where do we go when it seems as if darkness is our only companion and God is no where to be seen?

The dark times of life are threshold moments. The temptation is to do something; to fix it, to ease the pain, to escape the uncertainly, and to get back to what used to be. The God of Advent does not allow that. We can never go back to the way it was before the lights went out. God does not undo our life. God redeems our life. Advent is not so much about the losses as it is about the hope and coming of what will be. That hope and coming is the Son of Man, Jesus the Christ. The presence of Christ is the ultimate answer to every prayer, to every light extinguishing loss, to every Advent of our life.

Every time we tell the Advent story of our life we echo the prophet Isaiah’s cry, “*O that you would tear open the heavens and come down*” (Is. 64:1). And God does. God is faithful. God strengthens us to the end. In the midst of our losses we lack nothing as we await the revealing of Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:7-9). In Advent, we live in between what was and what will be. Advent invites us to receive the God who comes to us in the darkness of life.

At some point our world falls apart, life changes, or the lights go out. More often than not we see this as the end. When these things happen, Jesus says, remember the fig tree. Read the signs correctly. When its branch becomes tender and it puts forth leaves you know summer is near. So also when the darkness overtakes your life know that the Son of Man is near. Christ’s presence, our healing, and salvation, are always taking place in the dark and messy parts of life. We have not and never will be abandoned to the darkness.

“*Be alert*,” Jesus warns. He commands us to “*Keep awake*.” Darkness is not our enemy as much as is falling asleep. We fall asleep whenever fear controls our life, when hope gives way to despair, when entitlement replaces thanksgiving, when we choose what is comfortable rather than life-giving. Whenever we think our life is over, that darkness is our final reality, that we have been abandoned, or that loss and darkness are our only reality… then we have fallen asleep.

To often we allow the darkness to deceive us into believing there is nothing worth waiting or watching for. So, we close our eyes. We fall asleep and we become part of the darkness. We refuse to see the One who is always coming to us. The danger in the darkness is that we do not give out eyes time to adjust. We do not trust our night vision. Night vision is not about the light around us but the light that is within us, a light that can never be extinguished.

The Advents of our lives ask us to trust the Coming One more than the darkness. It means we must sit, listen, wait, watch. In the darkness of Advent we move slower, we listen more than we speak, we hold questions rather than answers. We wait expectantly but without specific expectations. Waiting in darkness is an act of faithfulness and surrender to the Coming One. Waiting becomes our prayer, a prayer that is and will be answered by God’s presence.

Tell your Advent story; a story of change, loss, darkness. Then sit down. Be still. Be quiet. Listen. Wait. Watch. These are the practices of Advent. Why? Because God, as prophet Isaiah said: “*works for those who wait for him*”. Amen.