

In the midst of all the overwhelming events
going on in our world these past weeks,
you may have overlooked an interesting piece of news:
The “Starbucks holiday controversy”.

The Rev. Fanny Belanger
Sunday, November 29
1st Sunday of Advent
Jeremiah 33:14-16
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36

In case you've missed it, let me explain this briefly to you:
This holiday season, at Starbucks, they decided that their paper cups would be red.
Plain red.
No message whatsoever on it.
No “Happy Christmas”
for the millions of coffee addicts, tea connoisseurs, hot chocolate amateurs and spicy latte lovers
all over the country.

And so,
“Does Starbucks hate Jesus?” was the question that took over some Christian social medias
“Does Starbucks hate Jesus?” if they made the choice not to remember us that
Christ is the reason for the season.

Christ is the reason for the season,
we will hear that a lot – as we enter our Advent liturgical time as of
this very day.
Christ is the reason for the season
a lot of good Christians try to remind a world who
seems sometimes to care more for the type of hot beverage they pick than for the kind of life they live.

And yet my concern is:
Although, hopefully, this is all very well-intentioned
it is, of course, absolutely untrue.
If we want to be good evangelists, as our new Presiding Bishop invites us to be,
Intellectual honesty and historical accuracy are
a key
that should lead us to acknowledge that actually
Christ is *not* the reason for the season.

According to academics,
from India through Persia and Egypt to Celtic countries
Winter solstice has been celebrated since maybe as long as 12,000 years.
10,000 years before this very day where *away in a manger,*
a young woman would lay down Joshua her first born, in a barn in Bethlehem.

For Christians, acknowledging this truth is of course a bit scary
and yet, instead of being a stumbling block to our faith
I think it should help us to get *what this really all about.*

And then, instead of pouring out on people that their way of celebrating the holiday is non sense
if Christ is not at the center of it
Maybe we need to think for ourselves what it means for us
To choose deliberately to make Christ our reason for the season,
as the first Christians decided to do in their pagan world.

And the thing is, we shouldn't be afraid.

The Eternal return of the Sun, the Eternal return of the same

is maybe comforting

But it's also a condemnation, the trap that keeps us from reaching any other destination.

Our ancestors just wished that the world will always be the same – *maybe not seeing*
that a time that never ends has no meaning, no finality, no point to reach
we can just hope that things

will be okay

that our children will be a little happier than we have been

that the next generation will make less mistakes than we did.

A lot of us still live this way today – even among Christians:

Please God, let just everything continue to be okay.

And yet Jesus tells us today

that it cannot go on and on.

This end that we all fear is judgment alright but yet it does not have to be a condemnation
It's the absence of closure that would be the condemnation.

- Think about Sisyphus rolling his boulder all over again -

Time ends because we can reach an end, because we can be heading somewhere
Because we have a reason to be.

Of course, we may also decide to freeze, to live in a circular time instead of a linear time.

But Jesus warns us today against

the eternal return of the same that only leads to boredom

dissipation in activities, things we are addicted to, obligations we think we need to fulfill.

Jesus warns us against a life that

repeats itself again and again

a life that has nowhere to go, a life that only perpetuate a blind and obstinate form of survival.

And we need to be careful because

Boredom is not the lack of activities, boredom is the lack of purpose

We can be overly busy and bored to the core.

In our society we often look for change for the sake of change only

We do crazy things out of boredom

In the long term comfort and security can empty our hearts as well as destroy our lives.

Indeed, we need to pray to be able

not to be overcome by darkness, by the loss of those things that make us feel safe.

But we also need to pray to be able not to trust them

in the first place.

The good news is that

as spring is already inside a bare tree
the kingdom of God is already there
and although we experience the consequences of winter,
the worst is already behind us.

You see, when Jesus refers to the fig tree, it's not to do poetry.

It's because Jeremiah said:

A branch is springing up on Jesse's tree, a branch is springing up for David.

Jesus is pointing out to himself as the Messiah.

This generation won't pass away until all these things have taken place

All things have found their purpose, and have been accomplished in him.

Remember when he says: *Before Abraham was, I am.*

Jesus talks to us today from a time where there is no time

because time is not needed anymore to accomplish anything.

In Acts 7, Saint Stephen as he is dying says he could see the Lord coming in a cloud with power and

great glory

These things aren't the "future", in the time of this world, these things are the reality of who Christ is.

All these things have already taken place in Christ.

And this life is our chance to take place among these things.

This life is our chance to take our place in Christ.

Christmas' message is peace and joy indeed

But Redemption won't come to us unless we raise our heads to welcome this time of Advent.

Which means:

Instead of fleeing to a place of rest and false securities,

which can be material

but which can also be found in a simplistic faith

May we welcome this life and this world, with its struggles, challenges and questionings

- and find Christ in them -

May we choose a God that doesn't just

keep us satisfied

keeping the world going for us.

May we choose a God

who brings not only change

but growth, maturity and repentance.

As Paul reminds us, we are invited to let God direct our way, increase our love, strengthen our hearts.

This does not go without a profound sense of disruption.

So may Christ be the disruption in this season. Amen.