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Everything falls apart during Advent.

Now, that might well be true in your own family,
in your own life.

The burdens and the expectations of this season
can overwhelm and overturn
even the best laid plans.

The surprise of grief,
as all around you seem to rejoice;

or just the basic hurry required by the secular Advent calendar,
ticking off the 24 days from December 1 on to Christmas.

But even that is a lie,
because we all know
that Christmas has been in Walmart since October 29
and in Hobby Lobby since August the 15!

Everything falls apart during Advent.
That is true in every way I can say it.

All these weeks,
things have been falling apart in the gospel.

*Rejoice, and again I say rejoice!!
...YOU BROOD OF VIPERS!!!*

Apocalypse has followed us on the path,
all the way back to the first Sunday,
*There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars,
and on the earth distress among nations
...People will faint from fear and foreboding
of what is coming upon the world."*

Even today,
we have sweet Mary.
Mary the Mother of Jesus.
Mary, the Mother of God.

How could she be preaching apocalypse?

*He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly."*

Hard news if you have ever been proud
or been powerful
or even wanted to be.

Hard news to hear
that God will overturn all that is,
and bring about what was always meant to be.

Because...we live in the midst of what is.

We are,
to a great degree,
responsible for the way things are.
We are the people who put up with the way things are.

And Mary says that change is coming,
change is starting
with the child she nurtures in her womb.

It is hard to hear apocalypse.
It is just as hard to preach it.

After all, here I am,
trying to support you,
trying to make something of a map
for us to get from the way things are,
to the way things ought to be.

How do you feel when you hear apocalypse and judgement?

*Then the sheep will be separated from the goats,
those on his right and those on his left.*

*And those on his right will go off to everlasting light
and those on his left to everlasting torment.*

How do you feel when you hear that?

Afraid?
Ashamed?

It's a weird dance we step,
trying to take the sin of the world seriously.
The sin we see around us
and the sin we see in us.

To take that seriously,
while also taking seriously
the idea that Jesus came into the world,
not to condemn the world,
but that the world might be saved.

Apocalypse reminds us that things aren't right.
That things are broken.

Even that we are broken.

And Advent is full of apocalypse.

Everything falls apart during Advent.

The plans we make for a Holly Jolly Christmas.
And the house of cards we construct
about how we are able to cope
with the difficulties of the world.

Everything falls apart.

And Jesus is coming.
Coming to judge the world.

I don't know about you, but hearing the word *judgement* in church,
my mind goes straight to Judgement Journey.

Years ago, I took our youth group
to the Revelation themed haunted house
hosted by a local church.

Judgement Journey is meant to play on the fears,
the anxieties that I have been talking about in my sermon.

The part of us that knows we don't measure up,
the place in our heart that knows we don't treat ourselves or others
the way we ought.

For some reason, we assume that judgement
will mean condemnation.

Jesus is coming to judge the world.

Apocalypse has been happening all through Advent,
but so has something else.

Have you noticed the promise that God has made
each Sunday these last weeks?

Just as apocalypse has swirled all around us,
confusing and disorienting us,
just at the right time,
we hear,
clear as a clarion,
the promise of God.

It's been tucked away,
right near the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.

*It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give
thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.*

*Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and
to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in
power and great triumph to judge the world,
we may
without shame or fear
rejoice to behold his appearing.*

*That we may,
without shame or fear,
REJOICE to behold his appearing.*

Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world,
but that through him,
the world might be saved.

Everything falls apart during Advent.
Our plans for Christmas,
our neat and orderly understanding
of the way things ought to be.

The lofty are brought low
and the lowly are exalted.

Everything falls apart during Advent.

Judgement does not lead to condemnation,
but instead to forgiveness
and newness of life.

The promise has been made.
The promise will be kept.
*He shall come again,
in power and great triumph
to judge the world.*

*And we may,
without shame or fear,
rejoice to behold his appearing.*