



Just this. Just now.

I was driving to work one day thinking about my schedule – the meetings I needed to attend, reports I needed to finish, preparations for upcoming travel, email, phone calls, and making a grocery list in my head so that I could pick up what I needed for supper on the way home from work. All of a sudden, I found myself pulling into the parking garage at the Lutheran Center. I had driven the 9 miles to work and had no idea how I got there. I didn't remember the traffic lights, the turns, the scenery – nothing. I had been so absorbed in what was coming up that I was completely oblivious to the present.

I think this experience is not unique to me. We set part of our lives on autopilot and set the planning, list-making, what-if scheduling part on overdrive. Now, planning is a good and necessary thing. One ought to be aware of what is coming up and what needs to be done, but I found that I was so driven by the contingencies and possibilities that I was everywhere all of the time, and, therefore, not anywhere at all.

I asked my spiritual director about this, and she recommended that I meditate on these four words: “Just this. Just now.” It's a simple discipline but not an easy one. It can alleviate all that anticipatory stress but only if we are willing to be still.

Here we are in Advent. This season doesn't exist in secular culture where everything is barreling toward Christmas. No time to wait, no time to notice, no time to be present. Not this. Not now. All of a sudden, we will find ourselves on the day after Christmas not knowing how we got there.

Advent is a holy season, a season that bids us to be present, to be still. So much is evoked in this season – hope, longing, and the bittersweet awareness that the world is beautiful and broken. Consider all of these things. Sit with them. Pray with them. Be aware of this time of great promise that comes, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, when night is longest. Come, Lord Jesus.

Wait for the Lord. Disengage the autopilot. Notice. Just this. Just now.

Blessed Advent and merry Christmas, dear church!



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God's work. Our hands.