

“...you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man WILL come!”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, Mark Twain wrote a story called, “**The Terrible Catastrophe**.” It’s about a group of people who are trapped in a tragic situation. They are doomed to die. They have no way of escape. They are, indeed, on the verge of a **terrible catastrophe**.

Twain didn’t want the story to end unhappily. **BUT**, he didn’t see how he could save the people. It was like having them trapped in a plane that was about to crash into a mountain.

So, Twain concluded the story with these two sentences:

**“I have these characters in such a fix ...that I can not get them out of it.
Anyone who thinks he can—is welcome to try!”**

Now, in one sense, that’s a very unfair ending. **BUT**, in another sense, it’s a good ending, in that it gets the reader personally involved.

For example, suppose there was a plane seconds away from crashing into a mountainside. How would **you** save it?

“Were I on the crashing-plane of humankind, what would I do?” you ask.
Well, I am glad you asked that question!

First-off, we have to start with the ‘big picture.’ some 2,000 years ago, the human race found itself in a similar situation. Sin/evil had entered the world and was spreading like wildfire. The human race was trapped. There was no way it could save itself.

If Mark Twain were alive, he’d have summed up the situation the same way he summed up his story:

**“These people are in such a fix ...that I can not get them out of it.
Anyone who thinks he can ...is welcome to try!”**

God the Father saw our ‘situation.’ He didn’t want our story to end sadly. He loved the human race far too much for that. His love is perfect & without limit. So, **HE** thought of a way to save us.

God the Father sent his only Son into the world as a member of the human race. And we all know what Jesus did then. He not only died as **THE** ultimate, human sacrifice, **BUT** he built a Church with its Sacraments, laying down the foundation to build the Kingdom of God. It was God’s way to rescue us from sin/evil ...**without** taking away our **freewill**, while giving us the **chance** to start over! Jesus did **not** bring God’s Kingdom to completion. He gave **that** job to us.

For the sake of clarification, I share with you this thought-provoking, Peanuts cartoon:

1st frame, Charlie Brown is staring at a toolbox, repeating to himself, out loud:

“I can’t do it! I can’t do it! I just can’t do it!”

2nd frame, Lucy enters, saying to Charlie:

“What’s wrong Charlie Brown? You seem unhappy.”

Last frame, Charlie answers Lucy:

I am unhappy! I want to build a workbench, **BUT I don’t have a workbench to build it on!”**

The point—when we apply it to Jesus and our ‘situation’—is clear. Jesus made us a workbench upon which we can complete the work he began. Jesus, the humble carpenter of Nazareth, did not complete the work. He gave **that** job, right here in our corner of the vineyard, to us. This is where we are to raise our families, where we are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to welcome the stranger, to work for peace & justice... ..to love one another as Jesus loved us.

Advent is a season wherein we are to do **two** things:

1st, to call to mind the **terrible situation** that the world was in before Jesus came. Ponder it:
...NO Church, as we know it, NO Communion, NO Mass, NO sacraments; NO fairness or justice, NO peace or security, NO human dignity or respect for life. For only by appreciating such, can we properly celebrate the joy of Jesus' coming to us on that 1st Christmas... the down payment for Easter & Salvation!

2nd, to call to mind that **Jesus will come to us again**. He will judge each of us, personally, on how well we have used his workbench, that is, how well we have contributed to the work he left us.

You see, you and I are living in that divine interval between the **lightning flash** of his **1st coming**, (which included his death & resurrection) and the glorious **thunderclap** of his **2nd coming**, when we will be judged on what we have done here, in our corner of the vineyard, i.e.... how we have learned to love.

I close with this simple prayer:

"God our Father, your Son became one of us.
He saved us from the terrible catastrophe to which sin had doomed us all.
He built for us a workbench—upon which we are to build a better world:
A world of justice, peace, and love,
A world of obedience, patience, and kindness,
A world of honesty, respect, and dignity.
Here, we are to raise our families; here, we are to eat and sleep—
here--in our own corner of the vineyard.
We know he will come again, at the hour of our death,
to judge us on how hard we have tried to build a better world...
than the one we found.
Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.
We thank you for that 1st Christmas.
And, we thank you for this ... 'Advent Season' itself,
...a time to prepare for this Christmas!"

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Incidentally, like Twain, I can think of no way to get those people out of that crashing-plane.
Only God could have thought of such a miraculous, divine plan to save humankind...
and it all started with a tiny baby in a manger!)