

# Epistle of St. Paul December 2016

Sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus,

My brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

The season of Advent is upon us and as we wait and watch, as we make plans and preparations, we anticipate not only the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the anticipation of the return of Christ our Savior, but also the arrival of a new pastor to shepherd this flock of believers in 2015 and beyond. We are a people of HOPE in a world in despair. We are a people of JOY to a world living distress and disappointment. We are a people of FAITH because we believe in the Christ Child. We are a people of LOVE because God first loved us.

Advent is a time of anticipation, preparation and celebration. We are anticipating the return of Jesus Christ to claim us beloved children of God. Unlike the left behind series (which has NO biblical basis) we look forward to the return of Jesus. We also remember the time when the Israelites were anticipating the birth of the one who would set us free. And as with any significant birth, we annually have a celebration for the baby born in a stable to a homeless couple.

In the Advent hymn, *Come, Tough Long-Expected Jesus*, Charles Wesley wrote:

Come, though long expected Jesus, Born to set thy people free,  
From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

May you continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ as the hymn announces so folks know freedom in Christ, hope, joy and peace in their lives. You are the messengers as were the shepherds on that first Christmas. Be messengers from God, the holy angels of today because most of the world is waiting to hear the news of liberation from sin and decay.

It has been my joy to be your interim pastor for over a year. Many of you have shared your joys and sorrows, your hopes and disappointments with me. It is always a sacred honor to know you in both the good times and the troubling times of your lives. I thank you for including me in your lives and the valuable ministries at St. Paul. I know God will continue to bless you as you are bearers of good news.

May the hope and joy of Christmas live in your hearts this year and forever.

Shalom,  
Pastor Bev

