

Common Rule Chapter 2 Paragraph 3

Jesus did not come to us to change God's mind about humans-God's love and mercy were everlasting before time, and on into eternity.

Today is the third Monday in Advent or to say it in more church-y terms it is the Monday after the third Sunday of Advent, my family Christmas is less than a week away; therefore, when I read this my mind is thinking in terms of Advent and Christmas. God's one and only Son is about to be reborn in my heart and my life, soon, very soon. He is not reviving my heart and soul in order to change God's mind about me, or to modify his love towards me in any way. God has loved me the same yesterday today and forever since the beginning of time. And even if I were to somehow make a big mess out of Christmas at my cousin Roberta's house and my family were to say that they no longer love me (very unlikely to happen with this side of the family) God would still love me the same as she did before that happened.

But Jesus did come to us to change our minds about God.

Advent as we know is a time to prepare our hearts, minds and lives to receive the newness of Christ in our lives, This can and may very well change a person's ideas about God even if that person had been a Christian for most of if not all their lives. I know that this year the process of observing Advent as a contemplative is doing just that for me. In his book "Celebrating Abundance: Devotions for Advent" Theologian and pastor Walter Brueggemann writes about the small difference between John the Baptist and Jesus, but no matter how small that difference is it is the space on which our faith turns. It is a huge leap to go from advent and preparation and to the birth of newness in the Christ. That change is Jesus and it is celebrated each Christmas, when we commemorate Jesus coming and changing our minds about God. This is when we realize that God is a loving God, a caring God a God who is concerned about each of us , who shows us the way by coming into the world as a vulnerable baby, born in a manger, to a single woman.

Jesus came to show us what God is like.

Jesus did not brag about what his father in heaven was like, he simply reported to us what he is like. Reported on his love and mercy and he did so by example more so than with words . It was as if he was taking advice from saint Francis who said, "preach the Gospel always and when necessary use words." Jesus came, and is coming again to show us that God is love, God is compassion.

That God desires healing and reconciliation: not punishment and retribution.

Jesus offers us a catalog of newness of miracles, of wonders and transformations. I have seen transformations, I have experienced transformations that could only have been brought about by God, that I would personally classify as miracles. These transformations have taken me out of living a life lived in fear and self-loathing into as life based on what is possible and knowing in my heart that all things are possible in Christ. I no longer live in fear because Christ has taught me that his perfect love cast out all fear. Every life that the Christ is welcomed into newness happens. Everywhere that Christ goes newness happens; newness, healing and wellbeing emit from his body (is not the body of Christ the Church , should we therefore not expect to see this in the church). This in my opinion is what it means to live as Christ lived.

God is Love everlasting

As I learn to live with a bit of Advent and a bit of Christmas in each day of my life, continually preparing to receive Christ and continually celebrating his being born into my heart and consciousness . May I also remember that Christ was born with a mission and put a little bit of Easter in each day as well. It is though being born, dying and rising from the dead that we know that Christ love is everlasting. I will not speak for anyone else here, but I know that I go through this cycle many times throughout the year, heck there are weeks that I may go though it two or three times. My point is that every time that I am called to die to myself, to decrease in order that Christ may increase any time I need to descend in order to ascend , this is the pattern that is being lived out in my life Each time I recite the creed I affirm the cycle. I cannot have Easter without Christmas and I cannot have Christmas without Easter it is all interconnected, it is all one . it is everlasting Love.

God desires a deep, personal relationship with each and every person.

Prepare my heart, O God, for the newness that is coming to the world. Come be born in my life..

There are many times in the past that I prayed to receive Christ as my personal Lord and Savior because I was afraid that if I did not I would go to hell. Today when I pray The prayer at the beginning of this response I do so because I want to have a closer relationship with Christ not out of fear of retribution or punishment.