

The Fairview Disciple



The Mission of the Fairview United Methodist Church is to enhance the spiritual growth of its members and the community by providing sound and meaningful experiences through worship, education, outreach, personal involvement in the ministry of the church, and the general nurturing of the congregation in keeping with the example and teaching of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

December 2009

Fairview United Methodist Church

The other day as I trimmed my fingernails I cut one of them shorter than intended and immediately felt a twinge of pain in the nail bed. I had cut the nail to the quick, and for about three days that place on my finger smarted whenever something touched it.

Always fascinated by words, I pondered the phrase *cut to the quick*. I can think of only one other instance in which the word *quick* is given its archaic meaning of “living”—that being in the Apostles’ Creed: “[Jesus] shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Even this usage is hardly heard anymore, the Creed having been updated to “the living and the dead.”

Then I began to mull over the phrase, “He shall come to judge,” and two questions imposed considerable weight: What does it mean that Christ shall come? And what does it mean that he shall come in judgment?

THE PASTOR’S POUND

*“An ounce of
common sense is
worth a pound
of clergy.”*

— John Adams

For persons who prefer to celebrate Christmas only in terms of the fact that Christ has *already* come—and that as a sweet, harmless baby—the notion that Christ is *yet* to come is incomprehensible, even undesirable. We know what Christmas is all about, thank you very much; don’t cloud our wassail with

warnings of judgment and calls to repentance.

Every idea is (or at least should be) balanced by a converse idea. In the case of Christmas, which celebrates the presence of Christ, the balancing theme is that of Advent, which speaks in some sense of Christ’s absence, of empty places longing to be filled. In other words, the season of Advent speaks of what is *not yet*.

For we do believe that there is more. Not only that, but we believe that what is coming is good, for with it comes the consummation of God’s promises in Christ. We need not fear the fact that “He shall come to judge the quick and the dead,” for we have already seen the face of our Judge, and it is the face of love. “Stand up,” said our Lord, “and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28)

The prayer with which the entire Bible closes (Revelation 22:20) is in fact an Advent prayer, uttered in yearning and hope by longsuffering saints: *“Come, Lord Jesus!”*