

# Christ the Lord Church - Pinole, CA

The First Sunday of Advent      November 29, 2020

*“Open Unto Me”*

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good Morning, everyone, on this first Sunday of Advent. I hope everyone had a good, even if small or less than one would like, Thanksgiving. In honoring the desire of the Episcopal Church to enrich our worship with diverse voices, we will be walking Advent this year through the journey of Howard Thurman. So please, maybe spend some time learning about this amazing African American who often gets missed in the shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Our Gospel today tells of the coming of Jesus. Now this scripture has been used as a fear tool and has led to television series and multiple movies about the rapture or being left behind. But I take seriously that they may have this scripture completely wrong. Maybe it is because I am a woman and most scripture was written by men; maybe it is because most scripture was written as “after the fact,” of the actual event. Maybe it is because the Gospel of Mark continually shows us disciples who just don’t get the ideas Jesus is putting forth.

I don’t know if there will be a “rapture” type event, but as a hospice chaplain, I can assure you that Jesus will come to everyone on their deathbed. And as most would probably desire, we want to be asleep. I say asleep, because we want the body still, so the soul can be awake.

What if we turn this scripture around to the Jesus we know and experience as a savior, rather than someone trying to catch, as at an impromptu moment. As one who has befriended us, lifted us up when we lost strength, carried us when we could no longer move.

The Jesus who inspires us to learn about our neighbor, ask and receive forgiveness when necessary, makes us commit to social justice and feeding the poor. This is my Jesus, I hope this is your Jesus too. What if we want to stay awake, not in fear of being caught sleeping, but in a desire to see a friend we have longed to see, face to face.

This is Advent for me. The staying awake to be there for the birth. The birth of innocence again into my life, even if only for a moment. To take the time to recognize there is goodness, love and hope in everything, everywhere. Maybe not always in my eyes, but definitely in God's amazing plan.

As Anne Lamott would state, "I didn't need to understand the hypostatic unity of the Trinity; I just needed to turn my life over to whoever came up with redwood trees."

The needing to make the most of my life, the time I have here in preparation, for seeing Jesus. The desire to be ready for my very savior, my friend, my confidant, my eternal soul mate to return. But how do we stay awake? How do we stay ready?

Again, I give you Howard Thurman, and pray.

Open unto me—light for my darkness.

Open unto me—courage for my fear.

Open unto me—hope for my despair.

Open unto me—peace for my turmoil.

Open unto me—joy for my sorrow.

Open unto me—strength for my weakness.

Open unto me—wisdom for my confusion.

Open unto me—forgiveness for my sins.

Open unto me—tenderness for my toughness.

Open unto me—love for my hates.

Open unto me—Thy Self for my self.

Lord, Lord, open unto me!

Welcome to Advent! *Amen*