

Advent Thoughts

As I write this article there are only 28 days left to Christmas including four Sunday's. In the Christian church this is the beginning of a New Year which is called the period of Advent. It is traditionally known as a time of waiting in which Christian people are encouraged to channel their thinking, week by week in four directions.

On the week of December 2nd "**Hope**" is at the forefront of our thinking. Hope is what gets us out of bed in the mornings. It is what keeps us soldiering on in the face of life's twists and turns and is an essential element of a balanced life. Those who can embrace hope in their daily living are able to see their "glass" as being half full and normally project a positive attitude and vibes to those with whom they come into contact. Hope in the Christian context is the anticipation (in simple terms) to see the incoming of a new order in the world that embraces Spirit in all elements of our lives. On a practical note for everyone, Christian or otherwise, during this week can you intentionally help another see beyond their immediate issues and look for the rainbow rather than the gathering gloom of clouds?

On the week of December 9th. "**Peace**" is the focus of our attentions. Now I know that when we speak of this word our minds usually lead us to thinking about war and armed conflicts. This is of course true in part, and we must remain mindful that sadly, many countries in this age of enlightenment still choose the gun in lieu of dialogue. Yet Peace is one of the most elusive elements of our own lives today, even here in Canada. Switch on your television and count the number of programs that project violence, disharmony and conflict. As human beings we seem unable to live without conflict. Thank goodness for HGTV and similar. Surely we should be looking at ways to project and embrace peace into our lives as an intentional way of living rather than conflict. It seems to me that peace never sold a newspaper or made a newscast on television interesting. Note to oneself: "I will avoid the temptation to snap back at another, even though I might be provoked to do so. I will turn the other cheek."

As December 16th. arrives, everyone is becoming more "**Joyfully**" aware of the impending arrival of Christmas. Who am I kidding? For many like myself who are procrastinators, subdued terror is more the issue as I ponder all of the things that are on my "to do" list and remain, as yet, unfulfilled. But as so often is the case, many people have subverted the real message of Christmas by substituting a frenzy of spending. As I get older I realize more and more that Christmas has nothing whatever to do with giving presents to one another. Yes, it is a quaint custom, however the "love" that is generated in this way often does not last as long as New Year 's Eve. Cynical, yes perhaps, but as one who believes in the validity of the message given to the world in the life of the one we call Jesus, I would



rather see that energy being spread out over the coming year in other more constructive ways.

Finally when December 23rd arrives, "**Love**" should be on

our minds. I say "should," because it never ceases to amaze me the number of people who have difficulty in saying: "**I love you,**" and meaning it. Yes, I know there are those in our society who would interpret that phrase as a "come on," and as a male, I could be in deep dodo if I said it to the wrong person. But I am not speaking about strangers here. I am asking you to think about your own family relationships and how you say or show your loving thoughts and feelings. Ask yourself; when was the last time I expressed these three words: "**I love you,**" to one for whom you care deeply? Can't remember? You will be like so many other people for whom these words of endearment seem more like an embarrassment than a caring statement. So have an action plan. Surprise someone in your family by smiling and saying to them the words: "**I love you.**" I'll bet that you make someone's day if you dare to risk. If you receive an adverse reaction then you can always blame it on Pastor Ian and say, "he told me to do it."

Finally my closing thought on all of this is; ' how can the Church as an institution do more, much more to embrace and live out in its actions among the peoples of its communities the values of HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE?' When we can answer that question I believe we will begin to reverse current trends of apathy towards embracing Faith and Spirit in our lives and in our living.

Hope, Peace, Joy and Love to you all
this Advent season.

- Pastor Ian.

p.s. A big and very grateful "**THANK YOU**" from me.
You all know who you are!