

Column

People collect all sorts of items. I am no exception. In the attic and around the house, I have cameras, ranging from an early Kodak Brownie Hawkeye to a pre-war German fold-out bellows model, as well as a few more modern ones. Most would still work if film could be found.

Simple cameras, such as the Brownie Hawkeye, are point-and-shoot. Mechanisms to adjust the lens speed and aperture opening are non-existent. On more expensive models, however, it is possible to adjust both, along with the capability of focusing the image seen through the lens. With a few twists and turns, a blur takes on form and shape and becomes crisp.

It is these latter types of cameras about which I am thinking today. That distorted image seen before any adjustment is made might be compared to what at times can be found in the viewfinder of our life. Our perception of what is true and lasting and indeed of God Himself gets blurred. What brings about this distortion is the hustle and bustle of daily life. Our lenses need refocusing to get back to the true image.

One opportunity for bringing such an adjustment about comes in the season of the church year that lies just around the corner – Advent. In 2022, it begins Sunday, Nov. 27.

Advent comes from a Latin word meaning ‘coming’ and refers to a four-week period of preparation leading up to Christmas. It is a time of reflecting on Jesus’ first coming as well as preparing for His second coming at the end of the age. Both themes are intertwined.

When we direct the lens of our lives back onto the One who is and is to come, everything else comes clear. We discover who we are, what our duties are to our neighbors, how to live productive and witnessing lives in a world of false values and material obsessions, and where we are going.

Jesus speaks of getting things in a right order when he says: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). “These things” refer to the ordinary things of life: food, clothing and shelter . . . the things which so often preoccupy and cause us to take our focus off ultimate things.

Advent, a season going back to the fifth century, gives us an opportunity for getting things in a right order. During this season we are summoned to refocus our lives onto the One who alone brings true happiness, contentment and hope. Means of doing this include: slowing down, reading our Bibles, being faithful in public worship and being attentive to those around us in need.

The challenge is whether we shall take advantage of this opportunity. Will we be led by Madison Avenue or Christ the Saviour? The choice is ours.

STIR up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the Sunday next before Advent, Book of Common Prayer)

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