

December 1, 2022

[Isaiah 40:1-11](#)

I've coached wrestling for many years. Advent reminds of the time I walked up to a wrestler lying on the bleachers before his match and said "Hey, it's time for you to warm up, you have a match in a little bit." The wrestler glanced up with a very sleepy look on his face and replied- "Did you ever see a Cheetah warm up before pouncing on its prey?" He then put his head backdown to continue dozing. Apparently, he didn't see the need to limber up before his "attack", so to speak. The only problem is that humans aren't cheetahs. We need a little warm up before we engage in something strenuous; we need to put in a little preparation before we exert ourselves because we're more likely than a cheetah to pull a muscle if we don't.

We've just entered the season of Advent, the time leading up to Christmas. It's typically referred to as a time of preparation. The text for this week comes from Isaiah 40:

*A voice cries out:*

*'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Apparently, there's something about the work of God that needs a warmup act. And so, God sent the prophets and John the Baptist to prepare the people for the Messiah. It's not clear why the need to prepare the people for Jesus' coming, but it may have had something to do with the idea that following Jesus is meant to be more than a cerebral event; rather it's intended to involve one's whole self. It seems to have been an attempt to get the people limbered up for what was about to take place. The birth of Jesus was meant to usher in a call to follow God in a way that would involve more than just the mind but every fiber of one's being. I think too often the idea of "following Jesus" is a nice catch-phrase but it doesn't usually take on the full-bodied experience that God wants it to. To follow, is intended to utilize every muscle and in order to do that we need a little preparation. We need to get up off the bleachers and start warming up; to start preparing to live as disciples.

Advent should be more than preparation for Christmas morning; it should be preparation for following Christ. This Advent, I invite you to join me as together we commit to some warmup before we get involved in the central activity of following. Let's start each day in prayer and reflection. We need to prepare our spiritual muscles before we head out to take on the day. Join me throughout the month of December by limbering up before we start our day. A wrestler shouldn't go into his match without a little preparation, and we shouldn't begin our day without it either. When we wake up in the mornings during Advent, perhaps we can engage in some prayerful exercises where we ask God to give us the strength and the courage to follow with not only our minds but our whole selves.

Steve Allen