

**So much of our world is artificial**

**Artificial sweeteners**

**Artificial trees**

**Artificial intelligence**

**Look at the ingredient list of almost any box of cereal**

**We even have a false sense of time**

**Advent is nothing more than a time for Black Friday**

**Cyber Monday**

**A time to shop**

**Have holiday parties**

**Racing from one thing to another**

**So much that Christmas itself becomes just a day**

**A day we simply want over so we can slow down a bit**

**This is why the Church gives us this season of Advent**

**A time to look forward**

**To Christmas morning, yes**

**But even more than that**

**It is a time to look beyond this particular Christmas**

**To the time the Lord will return**

**Like the Israelites Isaiah is writing to in our first reading**

**God had made them a promise**

**He would send them a messiah**

**They looked forward to his coming**

**God has made us a promise**

**Jesus Christ will return a second time**

**And we look forward to his return**

**In his writing, Isaiah helped the Israelites anticipate the Messiah**

**His writings can help our anticipation as well**

**The mountain of the Lord will be established as the highest mountain**

**Is this the highest mountain of our lives?**

**We all have mountains**

**Things we hold up in our lives**

**Our families**

**Jobs**

**Power or authority**

**Money**

**Not bad things in and of themselves**

**But are they the highest mountains in my life?**

**Or is the love of God first?**

**If the love of God reigns in our lives**

**It gives order and perspective to all the other things in our lives**

**The good and beautiful things**

**As well as the destructive things**

**What is the focus of my private life?**

**My professional life?**

**My family life?**

**Am I preoccupied with the world?**

**Or am I preoccupied with the Lord?**

**Do my choices and my will lead me to God**

**Or away from Him?**

**The same for my friendships**

**My passions**

**All things lead us on a path**

**Where is my path leading me?**

**What guides me on my path?**

**Do I seek Google for answers?**

**Or do I seek God for wisdom?**

**Answers and wisdom are not necessarily the same things**

**One pertains to the world**

**The other pertains to eternity**

**The goods of the world are limited**

**Seeking them opens the door to jealousy, envy and violence**

**The Israelites were called to go to the Temple**

**We are called to worship at Mass**

**Where we can receive Christ into our bodies**

**So we can receive his infinite wisdom**

**His forgiveness**

**His mercy**

**This is the only way to peace in our lives**

**Peace in our families**

**Peace in our nation**

**Peace in the world**

**Anything else leaves us wanting**

**This is true preparation**

**This is the path of Advent**

**The path Paul invites us to walk**

**The day of our salvation approaches**

**Put away the works of darkness**

**Drunkenness, promiscuity and lust**

**Rivalry and jealousy**

**And put on the armor of light**

**The way of Jesus Christ**

**Living his commandments in love**

**Again, the path of Advent**

**What is our path this year?**

**Will I follow the path of the world?**

**Being filled with the anxieties of the world**

**Running from event to event**

**Like those in the days of Noah**

**Or the two women grinding at the mill**

**One taken**

**One left**

**We are not called to do either / or**

**It is both / and**

**It is about perspective and balance**

**A perspective and balance only Christ can give**

**We know Christ is coming**

**We are called to be prepared**

**Like one knowing a thief is in the area**

**We don't go off leaving the lights on and the door open**

**We take precautions and make preparations**

**So as we enter this season of Advent**

**Let's see the invitation that is at our door**

**An invitation to see beyond the artificial beyond the lights of this world**

**Beyond the presents**

**All good things**

**We do not reject any of them**

**We walk among passing things**

**Letting them point us to eternal things**

**Preparing our hearts in anticipation**

**Keeping all things in the balance of God's love for us**

**So when Christmas does arrive**

**We will celebrate the true gift**

**The gift of Christ's return**

**The gift of being with Christ**

**Now and for all eternity**