

ADVENT

FORETOLD & FULFILLED



ORIGINS

FLEMING RUTLEDGE

“The biblical story is rigorously unsentimental. It doesn’t offer optimism. It doesn’t offer ‘positive thinking.’ It looks deeply into human misery, human folly, human pain, and plain old human disappointment. ...The Advent season, properly understood, is designed to help us understand [and] strengthen us for life in the real world, where there are malignant forces actively working against human well-being and the divine purposes of God. This is a world in which no

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one seems to know what to do about the catastrophic famine in [parts of the world]. This is a world in which the promise of freedom and democracy in [other places] is shifting before the eyes of the world into oppression and autocracy. This is a world in which our very best intentions turn against us. Advent always begins in the dark. But there is a 'but,' and we find it revealed in the story that the scriptures tell."

ALAN NOBLE, YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

“If I am my own and belong to myself, the first and most significant implication is that I am wholly responsible for my life. This is both an exhilarating and terrifying thought. And it’s not just that I am responsible for my personal survival, for food and shelter and so on. I also need a reason to live. I need purpose and direction. I need some way to know when I am failing at life and when I am succeeding, when I am living ethically and when I am not. I must have some way of determining on my deathbed that I lived a good, full life. ... Even when we discover our true self or create our own identity, we still need some kind of external validation, and so we must express ourselves—a process called ‘expressive individualism.’”

ALAN NOBLE, YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

We are our own and belong to ourselves, but identity always requires the acknowledgment of other people. There's a tension here, and you can find it all over our culture. On one hand there is the pull of autonomy: 'I am my own; only I can define myself; it doesn't matter how other people see me, only how I see myself.' But on the other hand, there is the pull for recognition that is inherently a part of identity: 'People must acknowledge me for who I am and see me how I desire to be seen.' ...Everyone is on their own private journey of self-discovery and self-expression, so that at times, modern life feels like billions of people in the same room shouting their own name so that everyone else knows they exist and who they

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are—which is a fairly accurate description of social media. To be recognized is to draw the gaze and the attention of others. To be affirmed is to draw their positive gaze. But if we are all responsible for creating and expressing our own identities, then everyone is in competition with everyone else for our limited attention, and no one is secure enough in their own identity to ground us with their approval. How can we cope with such fierce competition?”

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“Social media companies are forced to contract small armies of content moderators to check each flagged item and judge it according to the evolving community standards of the platform. That means men and women spending hours of a day at a cubicle staring at images of rape, murder, child abuse, animal abuse, torture, terrorism, and so on. ...To treat the trauma inflicted on their employees by the technique of social media moderation, the contracted companies introduce coping techniques: counseling, yoga, wellness breaks, and so on. These methods were almost certainly chosen with great care—and great legal counsel—for their ability to reduce anxiety (and liability) in the workplace with as little cost as possible. ...The

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reports about these contracted moderation companies are grim. In one investigation, The Verge found that employees at a Facebook moderation office in Phoenix, Arizona, were developing drug habits to cope. They turned to dark humor. They suffered panic attacks. They had sex with each other as a form of 'trauma bonding.' All the while, social media companies keep these employees at arm's length by hiring them as contractors, not full-time employees. ...Sharing photos online aids us in defining and expressing our identity and interpreting meaningful moments in our lives. But it comes at the cost of thousands of people's exposure to the worst that humans have thought and said and done."

GENESIS 49:8-10, NIV

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son.

Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.”

2 SAMUEL 7:11-12, 16, NIV

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

MATTHEW 1:1-17, NIV

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon...and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.



Inclusion is God's choice

TREMPER LONGMAN, GENESIS

“It appears that God does not choose based on human entitlement or custom. Ancient Semitic ideas gave preference to the firstborn, but God does not work according to those expectations. On what basis does he choose? Grace. There is nothing about [Bible characters] that determines this choice, only God. What does this mean for us? As we think about our own ‘status’ before God, we have to recognize that there is nothing in us that led to God’s choice. We are not smarter, bigger, more spiritually sensitive, stronger than others. We can thank only God. For this reason there is no boasting.”



Inclusion is God's choice

Jesus is no ordinary king

MATTHEW 1:1-17, NIV

Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar...Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth...David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife... Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Inclusion is God's choice

Jesus is no ordinary king

God has a purpose for you in your family

NEXT STEP

How do you see God working to redeem the knots in your family's tree? How can you be a part of creating a healthy family culture?