

Sabot (sabow) is the French word for a wooden shoe. Sabot is the root of our word “sabotage.”

In its original usage, to sabotage was to throw a wooden shoe into a machine to stop production.

Of course, it has come to mean any attempt to undermine or ruin something.

More and more each year the world sabotages Advent and Christmas.

Thrown into our celebrations are wooden shoes of many kinds –

all trying to hinder Advent and spoil its product, Christmas!

You know the sabots of this season – \_consumerism, \_busyness, \_debt, \_depression,

\_unmet expectations, Christmas carols piped at us in every store – background noise not songs of praise &

good news, \_pressures to over buy, over party, over decorate, overindulge, to want, want, want!

I went into Walmart the other day and saw a big 33 on their sign which counts down the days to Christmas;

that sign flashed me back to another Wal-Mart, another year – when I went in and saw a sign

that had a big 8 on it and it was just after Halloween – after a moment of panic and upon getting closer

I saw that it said: Only 8 Saturdays ‘til Christmas!

“HURRY!” the world says ... now there are only 4 and one of them is Christmas Eve!

Despite our yearly efforts, we all know this time of year is never perfect – many fight depression,

families experience conflicts in the making and keeping of traditions and amid it all –

Advent and Christmas easily get sabotaged – undermined, even ruined.

This morning I invite you to sit back and relax – know that no shoes, no sabots are flying here.

You’re safe, you can let down your guard – this morning you can breathe deeply of Advent –

the Christian church’s season before Christmas – before the celebration of birth and Messiah!

Today we begin Advent. Advent means “coming.” Who is coming? The Messiah of course! Jesus our Savior,

Christ the Lord! In this season, we anticipate three Advents – our yearly celebration of Christ’s coming

as a babe in Bethlehem. Christ’s coming in the fullness of time at the end of time, and Christ’s coming

anew into our hearts and lives. So – sit back – and breathe deeply of Advent!

Very early on a Monday morning in early Dec., 2 young children took their places at the breakfast table.

Heat rose from their bowls of oatmeal and cups of hot chocolate, teasing their sleepy eyes awake.

The older child looked upward and noticed the view out a high window.

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The sky was an inky blue, a deep indigo, and the silhouette of trees in the yard

poked up through the almost emerging dawn. “Mom,” he said, suddenly alert,

“look at the sky! It’s the same color as the Advent candles!”

In Advent, we turn our eyes upward.

The smoky blue threshold of night that blankets North America during these weeks can feel oppressive, so that emotionally we may feel “blue.”

But this vast celestial canopy can also inspire awe. Advent is that silver-blue hour between night and day,

between deep darkness and the light, its 6 a.m. just before the sun peeks over the horizon,

when we know in our hearts that indeed “salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers,

the night is far gone – the day is near.” Indeed – “Our Lord is coming!”

Advent is the messenger before the day of God, as John the baptizer was the messenger before Jesus,

calling people in darkness to increase in the light of love and to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Advent bridges night and day as the forerunner and beginning of the golden dawn.

Many might advise us to put away the color of night, exchange the wavering candles of our Advent wreaths

for brighter and better lights – for the whiteness of the Christmas season.

“Get rid of blue!” they say, “It is too cold, too distant for our happy holiday winter gatherings –

no one spends money with this attitude! Don’t worry, be happy, join the party!

Shop ‘til you drop! Eat, drink and be merry!”

Christian faith, however, is rooted in the death and resurrection of Jesus and sees all of life –

indeed, each season of the year – from the viewpoint of that central mystery.

Christian faith is far more realistic and truthful than the world’s message.

When we wrap ourselves in Advent's blue,

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we give color to the deep longing that is so frequently muffled in our land.

We give voice to our yearning for a world marked by God's salvation, God's forgiveness,

God's justice and God's peace.

So we start with blue – and we move through Advent wrapping ourselves in blue –

Advent becomes more and more God's guarantee renewed in the darkest, shortest days of winter –

a guarantee that we are not forgotten – that God has, does & will come!

That God has, does & will help. //

If we skip this season – if we let the world sabotage it – we miss out and cheat our faith.

For Advent is a time we need to prepare, to anticipate, to wait, to be quiet, to hope

and thereby to grasp the promise – always watching expectantly for the dawn.

Help is on the way!! Help has dawned on our world in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Help will come in his final glorious return – and help can come anew to us each day –

but only when we pause long enough to see the pre-dawn blue sky

turning to light, to hear the prophet's words of promise, to wait expectantly for God's coming.

If you don't wait to see it – it will likely pass you by all together and another year will simply end –

another Christmas will go by and you'll be left with only credit card debt, a nagging tiredness,

decorations to clean up and the rest of cold winter.

Friends, take time this year to do Advent. Duck the sabots thrown your way.

Do Advent devotions; read One Wintry Night, This is the Stable or other Christmas books

as a family. Come to worship, use an advent calendar or wreath at home to mark your waiting,

Come along caroling with our church family. Talk about your longings, hopes and faith,

and do acts of loving kindness for others.

Do ADVENT now; and CHRISTMAS December 24<sup>th</sup> through January 5<sup>th</sup>.

Your faith and life will be richer for it! AMEN