In the midst of all the overwhelming events going on in our world these past weeks, you may have overlooked an interesting piece of news:

The "Starbucks holiday controversy".

The Rev. Fanny Belanger Sunday, November 29 1st Sunday of Advent Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 Luke 21:25-36

In case you've missed it, let me explain this briefly to you:

This holiday season, at Starbucks, they decided that their paper cups would be red.

Plain red.

No message whatsoever on it.

No "Happy Christmas"

for the millions of coffee addicts, tea connoisseurs, hot chocolate amateurs and spicy latte lovers all over the country.

And so,

"Does Starbucks hate Jesus?" was the question that took over some Christian social medias

"Does Starbucks hate Jesus?" if they made the choice not to remember us that *Christ is the reason for the season.*

Christ is the reason for the season,

we will hear that a lot – as we enter our Advent liturgical time as of this very day

this very day.

Christ is the reason for the season

a lot of good Christians try to remind a world who

seems sometimes to care more for the type of hot beverage they pick than for the kind of life they live.

And yet my concern is:

Although, hopefully, this is all very well-intentioned

it is, of course, absolutely untrue.

If we want to be good evangelists, as our new Presiding Bishop invites us to be,

Intellectual honesty and historical accuracy are

a key

that should lead us to acknowledge that actually

Christ is *not* the reason for the season.

According to academics,

from India through Persia and Egypt to Celtic countries

Winter solstice has been celebrated since maybe as long as 12,000 years.

10,000 years before this very day where away in a manger,

a young woman would lay down Joshua her first born, in a barn in Bethlehem.

For Christians, acknowledging this truth is of course a bit scary and yet, instead of being a stumbling block to our faith

I think it should help us to get what this really all about.

And then, instead of pouring out on people that their way of celebrating the holiday is non sense

if Christ in not at the center of it

Maybe we need to think for ourselves what it means for us

To choose deliberately to make Christ our reason for the season,

as the first Christians decided to do in their pagan world.

Today, we asked God in our opening collect to *cast away the works of the darkness*And for thousands year indeed *casting away darkness* has been the reason for the season,
The reason to celebrate the solstice, the return of the sun.

When we see how bothered we can be here and now by the shortening of days, when we have the comfort, light and heat and all the entertainment I guess it's hard to imagine what it was like in the ancient times The terror to be overcome by the end of the day.

What we call Christmas, the shortest day and longest night of the year has been associated a very long time ago to the birth of God, not God the Son but God the Sun.

And God the Sun reminded people that the world would not be overcome by darkness The world would go on. Seasons return, new life emerges from death.

And paradoxically, it is when we are in the darkest place that hope can take over.

Being reminded what it was like to worship God the Sun We may understand why our Gospel today, in spite of its difficulty, is so interesting and help us to see how Christ, God the Son,

makes all the difference.

Jesus tells us that although we may find solace, comfort and security In the course of sun, moon, stars and the pace of the tiding seas,

This is not what is going to save us This world will come to an end as surely as we do.

Yes, as our ancestors did, we want the things that go away

to come back.

For us of course it's not only about the course of the sun, moon and stars, the pace of the tiding waters, It's also the daily routine, the coffee in the morning

talking to colleagues, walking the dog

and maybe we even miss -

Being stuck in traffic, arguing over stupid things

When we get sick, old. When we go through divorce, when we lose our job.

You don't know what you've got until it's gone, so we say We all experience that at some point When things get tough, we just want Back to normal again.

Well, we can go through rough time and hopefully "normal" will come back to us for a while, But today Jesus says: don't forget that

The whole figure of this world is passing away.

And the thing is, we shouldn't be afraid.

The Eternal return of the Sun, the Eternal return of the same

is maybe comforting

But it's also a condemnation, the trap that keeps us from reaching any other destination.

Our ancestors just wished that the world will always be the same – *maybe not seeing* that a time that never ends has no meaning, no finality, no point to reach we can just hope that things

will be okay

that our children will be a little happier than we have been that the next generation will make less mistakes than we did.

A lot of us still live this way today – even among Christians:

Please God, let just everything continue to be okay.

And yet Jesus tells us today

that it cannot go on and on.

This end that we all fear is judgment alright but yet it does not have to be a condemnation It's the absence of closure that would be the condemnation.

- Think about Sisyphus rolling his boulder all over again -

Time ends because we can reach an end, because we can be heading somewhere Because we have a reason to be.

Of course, we may also decide to freeze, to live in a circular time instead of a linear time.

But Jesus warns us today against

the eternal return of the same that only leads to boredom

dissipation in activities, things we are addicted to, obligations we think we need to fulfill.

Jesus warns us against a life that

repeats itself again and again

a life that has nowhere to go, a life that only perpetuate a blind and obstinate form of survival.

And we need to be careful because

Boredom is not the lack of activities, boredom is the lack of purpose

We can be overly busy and bored to the core.

In our society we often look for change for the sake of change only

We do crazy things out of boredom

In the log term comfort and security can empty our hearts as well as destroy our lives.

Indeed, we need to pray to be able

not to be overcome by darkness, by the loss of those things that make us feel safe.

But we also need to pray to be able not to trust them

in the first place.

The good news is that

as spring is already inside a bare tree the kingdom of God is already there and although we experience the consequences of winter,

the worst is already behind us.

You see, when Jesus refers to the fig tree, it's no to do poetry. It's because Jeremiah said:

A branch is springing up on Jesse's tree, a branch is springing up for David.

Jesus is pointing out to himself as the Messiah.

This generation won't pass away until all these things have taken place

All things have found their purpose, and have been accomplished in him.

Remember when he says: *Before Abraham was, I am.*

Jesus talks to us today from a time where there is no time

because time is not needed anymore to accomplish anything.

In Acts 7, Saint Stephen as he is dying says he could see the Lord coming in a cloud with power and great glory

These things aren't the "future", in the time of this world, these things are the reality of who Christ is.

All these things have already taken place in Christ.

And this life is our chance to take place among these things.

This life is our chance to take our place in Christ.

Christmas' message is peace and joy indeed

But Redemption won't come to us unless we raise our heads to welcome this time of Advent.

Which means:

Instead of fleeing to a place of rest and false securities,

which can be material

but which can also be found in a simplistic faith

May we welcome this life and this world, with its struggles, challenges and questionings

- and find Christ in them -

May we choose a God that doesn't just keep us satisfied keeping the world going for us. May we choose a God who brings not only change but growth, maturity and repentance.

As Paul reminds us, we are invited to let God direct our way, increase our love, strengthen our hearts.

This does not go without a profound sense of disruption.

So may Christ be the disruption in this season. Amen.