

David Foster Wallace was an award-winning American novelist, short story writer, essayist, and University professor.

In 2005, he gave the commencement speech at Ohio's Kenyon College. Towards the end of his address, he stated:

The capital-T Truth is about life before death.

...

*It is about simple awareness —
awareness of what is so real and essential,
so hidden in plain sight all around us ...*

Tragically, Wallace died in 2008 having struggled with depression for many years. This commencement speech was published a year after he died under the title "*This is Water.*" Wallace left an unfinished novel, which was also published posthumously, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 2012.

He has been called one of the most influential and innovative writers of the past two decades.

In today's readings, we first hear about King Ahaz. When we join the story, the Prophet Isaiah is exhorting the king to put his trust in God. Ahaz is disinterested, as he has secretly decided to join up with one of his pagan enemies. This hidden plan will, in the long-run, backfire. God knows this. And Isaiah knows this. So Isaiah offers Ahaz a way out - a sign from God to prove that God is on the king's side.

Ahaz, foolishly thinks that his secret plan is ... well, a secret. So he feigns piety - saying he could never think of testing God by asking for a sign. And this, of course, is an outright lie. Ahaz thinks he has this all figured out; and he thinks that he can lie to God ... and hide behind his false piety. The king assumes that he has everyone fooled - including God.

In frustration, Isaiah gives him a sign - not for his own time, but for the future ... the restoration of his dynasty which will occur 700 years later, in God's time, and according to God's plan ... a son to be born of a virgin.

In the Gospel, we hear of the fulfillment of this prophecy - seven centuries after it was uttered by Isaiah.

This prophecy is fulfilled in the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ - the Messiah - who brings the Good News ... the

*... the gospel of God,
which [was] promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,
the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh,
but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead ...*

This is the truth - in contrast to the lies of Ahaz. And as we hear elsewhere in the Gospel, Jesus calls Himself "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*".

The capital-T truth is not an idea - it is the person of Jesus Christ.

We may get caught up in all the hub-bub of the season, and lose our awareness of God's presence among us. This funny Hebrew word "*Emmanuel*" which means "*God-is-with-us*" calls us to a heightened awareness of the Divine Presence hidden in our midst. In the people around us. In those least of our brethren so often hidden in plain sight. In the Word of God ... the Scriptures. In this liturgy ... hidden under the Eucharistic species of Bread and Wine.

These four short weeks of Advent have been calling us to a deeper awareness of God's presence in us and around us. Jesus is coming. Indeed this is true. But He is already with us ... right ... now. If only we are willing to look ... to see Him ... to become more aware.

As we approach this altar to receive Emmanuel ... Jesus Christ ... Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity ... let us pray to know Him more intensely these last few days of Advent. May our relationship with Jesus, "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*" ... guide our path, increase our awareness of His Presence with us; and by our living out our present life in the fullness of the Good News ... the "*Gospel of God*" ... lead us all to eternal life.