

*Reflections on the Paintings*  
*from Pastor Paul Oman*  
*DRAWN TO THE WORD ADVENT - RCL Year B*

**Advent 1 - Mark 13:24-37**

My intention with this painting progression is to show the happening of the signs which indicate the end is near, as is mentioned in this Bible passage. Besides the sun and moon going dark and the stars falling from the heavens, the fig tree is also an image that helps us recognize this reality. The branch of the fig tree appears in the upper center of the painting, and remains throughout, changing from summer leaves and figs, to leaves that turn brown and dry, and figs that are ready for harvest. The landscape transforms as well, with darkness being predominant. The light of the Son of Man appears, returning unexpectedly, yet “no one knows the day nor the hour.” With the addition of touches of light, I attempt to build a sense of anticipation. Then, a figure appears in the foreground, “like a man going on a journey” who returns at this unexpected time at one’s door, shown by the second smaller figure in the middle ground. The home is dark; the shaft of heavenly light extends downward to the door; the light in the window appears. “Keep awake.” - *Paul Oman*

**Advent 2 - Mark 1:1-8**

John the Baptist is portrayed as a fiery, prophet-like figure in the wilderness, preaching on the coming of the Messiah with passion. The figure of John emerges, relatively small in comparison to the surrounding landscape, to give a sense of scale to the wilderness he is in. People appear, surrounding him to listen. Then a move is made from dry wilderness to the Jordan River Valley. The waters rise around John. The crowd takes its place on the banks. They then move into the river to be baptized. The dove appears in the distance over John’s head, symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit. - *Paul Oman*

**Advent 3 - John 1: 6-8,19-28**

This man sent from God, John the Baptist, is the focal point of this painting. He is placed large and with a commanding presence in the foreground, looking and speaking forth to all that is before him. The path that unfolds out into the distance is crooked, winding, and desolate. But then, as word travelled that there was this prophet-like man preaching in the wilderness, the religious authorities in Jerusalem wanted to know more. Priests and Levites were sent to question John. They emerge in the painting, standing immediately before him in their priestly robes with power, asking him who he is. With his answer, he points them away from himself to the One, the Messiah, who stands among them but whom they do not know yet. Water and reflections emerge

around their feet. Elijah in the fiery chariot appears in the background in response to the wonderings about John's identity. Then, the dove — not as the focal point yet, but off to the side — indicates the Messiah is in their midst and is to come. - *Paul Oman*

#### **Advent 4 - Luke 1: 26-38**

Into this scene appears a figure surrounded by streaming light. The angel Gabriel appears over the town of Nazareth, to Mary, to give her the message that she will bear the Son of God, Jesus. The figure of Mary then appears. The painting transitions from an outside scene to a view from within a simple Palestinian home, looking out the doorway to the angel's silhouette peering in. The one-room living quarters are separated from the animals by a drop in the level of the floor. The animals would help to warm the home. The subtle figure of the dove indicates the Holy Spirit descending on Mary. One of Mary's hands is visible in a posture indicating that she is both troubled by this news, and also receiving it as it is declared upon her. Her other hand, though not visible, may be considered to be on her chest as if to question if she is really the recipient of this news. The postures of the sheep and donkey give curious looks to what is transpiring before their eyes. - *Paul Oman*