

Sermon: Advent Waiting (family sermon)

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5

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Who here loves waiting? I don't love waiting. Even with music playing on the phone... especially with music on the phone, I don't like waiting. I don't like waiting in line at the check out aisle. I don't like waiting for good news to come. I really don't like waiting for bad news. I never much liked waiting to open my presents until Christmas, my parents would make all of us wait at the top of the stairs while they made the fire and their coffee, ergh! I just don't like waiting! And yet, in the Christian church we have a whole season of it, 4 entire weeks – beginning today, when we start waiting for the birth of Jesus to come.

But 4 weeks of waiting is not much compared to how long the prophets of Israel waited for Jesus. They saw a lot wrong with their country and their people, a lot of fighting going on and a lot of wealth hoarded by a few while everyone else was poor, and foreigners in their country were not being treated well and widows and orphans were neglected and the prophets were those people who saw these injustices and they would go out on the streets and scream at the people of Israel to do right by one another and by God. At times in their tirades, they would occasionally throw up their hands and say: “You know what? Sometime in the future there is going to be someone coming who will finally set everything to right and make everything good, despite you!” They referred to this person as the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, Almighty God in human form – it was Jesus that they were waiting for. And you know how long they had to wait? Not 4 weeks, not 4 years, but over 400 years! Can you imagine if you were sitting in a

waiting room and someone said “just wait here for about 450 years and then the one you are waiting for will come.” I think that would be hard.

But Jesus did come and when Jesus came all our waiting was over for Jesus the Savior, was among us in the flesh! And yet everything is not perfected yet. There’s still a lot wrong with the world. That’s where you and I come in, because Jesus’ Spirit has recruited us to be a part of making the world right. And we have faith that one day - we don’t know when but one day - all will be made right. Until that time we do what we can to make it right in the here and now... and we still wait. Wait and minute, we still have to wait? Well, yes. Waiting is a spiritual practice and we dedicate the whole season of Advent to it.

For waiting does a number of things – 1. It develops our sense of trust, reminding us that there is Someone greater than us at work, Someone that we can trust in and rely upon to set things right. 2. Waiting helps us develop our patience muscles, because the most important things in life – relationships, meaning, growth - are not instantaneous but involve a process and an unfolding. 3. Waiting makes the arrival of what you are waiting for all the more special. What if I told you that I could snap my fingers and make today Christmas Eve and tomorrow Christmas? Wouldn’t we feel gipped from the richness of preparation and patience and process leading up to Christmas? Then it would be over and what then? 4. And waiting makes it clear how much we value what it is (or who it is) we are waiting for. Waiting increases our care and desire for the thing or the person we are waiting for.

When I was 7 (who here is around 7), there was a birthday party of mine that I’ll never forget. My friends were coming over at 2pm for the party and I was so pumped. The morning just seemed to creep along and I

waited and waited. Finally 12:00 came and I had only 2 hours to go. So I walked to the end of our driveway, sat down on an old log, looked both ways down the street and began to wait. I waited and waited and after at least twenty minutes had gone by, I suddenly felt this itch inside of my pants leg and I absent-mindedly reached down and scratched it, which then set the hundred or so red ants that had crawled up my pants and down my shirt to commence their attack on me! I leapt up in a panic, ran up the driveway screaming and swatting my pants and shirt! My mom ran out of the door yanked me in the house, stripped me down and we got all the ants off. Some kind of birthday present! Eventually though, I gathered myself back together, got a change of clothes, took a deep breath and marched right back down the driveway to wait some more (not on that log!). It was twelve thirty and I had only an hour and a half left to wait. But you know what? That was one of my favorite birthdays of all. All that painful waiting made what I was waiting for all the sweeter.

So here we are at Advent - at exactly this time of year when waiting seems most like a nuisance, the church ushers us right into a season of waiting and says "wait here, he's coming soon"! Could we, this advent, do all of our waiting in line, or at the carpool or for our presents or on the phone, all of our waiting with more intention and purpose, use it as an opportunity to slow down a little bit and notice a little more and feel the pain of desire for what is coming? Could we embrace the waiting, refuse to be deterred by the ants in our pants, but hang in there, remembering that waiting is an act of faith and that one day what we are awaiting will come to bless our lives in the shape and form of the very Jesus Christ, Amen.