

Sermon for First Sunday of Advent - 11/29/20

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Mark 13:24-37, Isaiah 64:1-9

When?

Not yet.

I can't wait.

I'll wait with you.

I have a colleague, a pastor, who had a precocious 2 year old. She was 2 going on 20. Adore this child. And so my friend posted a video online a number of years ago, a conversation that she had with her little one.

She says, "Is it Christmas?"

"No" Momma says, "No sweetheart, we start Advent tomorrow." (you see the little one has been waiting for access to the advent calendar)

She says, "When IS Christmas?"

My friend replies, "In 25 sleeps".

(And she whispers sadly - I just can't do it justice-) "Momma, I can't wait that long."

My friend replies, "I'll help you wait, Darling."

So our little one waits...for Christmas. This is only her third time around but she has an idea of what to expect. Christmas will bring time with people she likes, special foods she loves, in this family probably a lot of singing and likely...some new toys. And she is confident that it will come. She's seen it, she's been assured. Momma will help her wait.

I don't know if her Advent calendar has chocolate pieces in it for each day. I know THAT would help ME wait. While she waited she probably did some things to prepare. Things that she'd need help with. She probably helped momma bake things, cookies? Cakes? I'm sure she helped her papa pick out a tree. I'm sure she helped, with her brother, to decorate that tree. There were probably games and crafts and snowglobes. Nativities to put

up, songs to prepare. And every night she went to bed. And every morning when she got up it would be one less “SLEEP” until that day.

I’m sure at some point she was convinced that Christmas would NEVER come and her momma assured her....**it’s coming. I’ll wait with you.**

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know.....”

The hearer’s of Isaiah's prophecy were longing for a promised Messiah. They did not know when he would come. They did not know how he would come. They did not know quite what it would mean when he did. They knew simply that God promised deliverance...

“From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him...” the prophet says. As they waited, God sent prophets along the way. Prophets, such as Moses to walk with God’s people as they waited. To put them about the business of the Kingdom, while they lived in expectation.

Generations passed away, never to know the Messiah’s arrival. Even when Jesus arrived, the waiting and expectation continued. Was this he? Is this the one who was foretold? Is this the deliverer of God’s people? This guy?

Then he was put to death. And they said “we had hoped he would be the one.” He rose. The apostles then set out into the task of telling others “he was the one, he has redeemed you, God has acted, God is acting and God will act again.”

And there is great evidence that those of this time lived in VERY expectant hope that Christ’s coming again in glory would be an immediate event.

That it could not possibly take more than a generation to come. And so they waited....

As they waited...they prepared. They acted to remember Christ by enacting his ways...extending shelter and food to sisters and brothers who required it. Extending healing and mercy to all who required it. Building a community of the faithful, a community of those who'd heard the promise. To wait, expectantly, for the coming Kingdom of God.

"I can't wait." The individual may have said. The community, the church, the Christ followers said, "We'll wait with you."

And so you...so I..so WE wait. Yes, with our little friend we wait with eager anticipation and probably some trepidation....for Christmas Day.

And so we wait, with some fear and uncertainty, for things to return to "normal". For safety and health. For the time when we can freely be in the same space and smile in real-life. When we can embrace, dance, and sing freely. And we wait for those vaccines, we wait for the numbers to go down. We wait in ways that care for each other and our neighbor.

And we wait, as a human family, for wars to cease, for hatred to disappear, for judgement to evaporate, for justice to be a reality. We cry out how long, o Lord?

And, unlike our 2 year old friend, we carry heavier burdens. We know that there is plenty going on around us that is NOT of God's kingdom. We know that there is shadow, that there is sadness, that there is violence, oppression, hatred, loss. The 25 days until Christmas Day to our little friend feel like an eternity. Our wait until God's reign of peace, love and justice is the wait that, perhaps, to us is an eternity. We can't wait, Lord. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done....on earth....How long....when?

I'll wait with you. Sisters and brothers, I'll wait with you. She'll wait with you. He'll wait with you. They'll wait with you. Together we will assure one

another of the Grace given for now. Together we'll keep busy preparing the way, doing the work of the kingdom. Being the hands and feet of Christ. Loving the neighbor, feeding the hungry, comforting the lonely. Standing with the oppressed. Crying out for mercy and justice. While we wait, we prepare. Until Christ comes again..

Lord, we can't wait that long. "I'll be with you even to the very end of the age.", Jesus says. Walking with us into the promise that "I will be your God and redeem you." We remain "awake" but we rest in that promise...

Like little pieces of chocolate in an advent calendar remind a toddler that Christ's birth day is coming.....the Word and this community are all little bits of grace -- all glimpses of our God...a foretaste of the feast to come. Where we gather all together at one table without fear.

For now...we remember His coming. For now, we snooze, knowing that something big is promised. For now we slumber, side by side. We care for one another...as though the Kingdom were here....until it comes....

Stir up your church, Lord Christ, and come. Amen.