

Advent Week 1 Reflection

Pr. Nicole Hanson-Lynn November 228-29

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:24-37

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the giver and sustainer of our faith, the Holy Spirit.

Waiting. Waiting in anticipation. Waiting for the other shoe to fall. Waiting in excitement. And somehow, the season of Advent encompasses all of these.

The season of Advent is excited waiting, preparing to welcome Christ. The excited waiting of a pregnant woman, waiting for her first child to be born. The excited waiting for guests. The excited waiting of children anticipating Christmas morning.

But also impatient waiting. The longing of a pregnant woman to *finally* give birth. The anticipation of longer days coming. The impatience of children still learning how to wait.

Our readings also speak to fearful waiting. Isaiah tells of people who eagerly awaited God's judgement, thinking that they would be able to gloat over their enemies, but instead found that God judged *them* guilty as well. Mark's reading has often been read as a foretelling of the end of the age. And even though Jesus tells signs, he cautions with "no one knows the day or the hour." It will be a surprise.

Waiting. Who likes' waiting?

Right now, we are in a season of waiting in the whole world. Waiting anxiously for Covid test results. Waiting hopefully for a vaccine. Waiting prayerfully for the days when we can see our families, spread across the world again and the days we can see our friends and neighbors face to face again.

How good it is that we practice this season of waiting each year. What are your favorite Advent traditions? What are the spiritual disciplines that help you to practice waiting? Some people make an Advent calendar. Some people use their Advent wreaths to mark the weeks and the different facts of waiting.

Growing up, we always had a German Shepherd. I have heard people joke that German Shepherds are "Velcro dogs," meaning that they love to be as close to their humans as possible. And my experience was the same. We always knew, whether we were going home to other people, or whether we would be arrive when everyone

else was out, that our dog would be standing at the front window, watching for us. She seemed to know as soon as one of her humans was a couple blocks away, and she would run to the window, whining and begging at the window until we came to the door. She would wake up from sleeping, leave her toys, even get up from spending time with one of us, because someone had come home. In many ways, she spent her life waiting. She was always ready to welcome us back home.

That's what I hear in the Mark text. We don't know when the end of the age will be. We don't know when the end of our Covid waiting will be. But we are encouraged to be ready to welcome Christ. We know from all four gospels that Christ surprises us, but we can practice keeping watch. Being ready to welcome.

And we do not do so alone. Paul promises in 1 Corinthians that God has strengthened us to the end so that we are not lacking any spiritual gift. Well, brothers and sisters, one of those spiritual gifts is the gift of perseverance in waiting. God has strengthened us for this period of waiting. So let us strengthen each other, let us hold fast while waiting, let us wonder at the mystery of Christ. And let us persevere in prayer, never ceasing.

Announcements

Thank you to everyone continuing their financial support. Your stewardship and discipleship are faithful witnesses in this time.

We will be making a Salem and Zion Advent devotional, with a reflection each day from members of the congregation. If you are interested in more information about how you can participate in writing a reflection or if you are interested in receiving the completed devotional, call our offices or contact Pr. Nicole with any questions!

Enclosed, you will find the worship bulletin, readings, and reflections for our (Pre)Advent Midweek Worship services. Our theme is "Wandering in the Wilderness: Learning to Trust God."

Peace be with you.