

Luke 21: 25 - 36  
Jeremiah 33: 14 -- 16  
The First Sunday in Advent, November 29, 2009  
"The Waiting Game"

Let us Pray:

We long for the promise: safety, peace.

We are a worried people beset by toil and trouble; out of work, money, time.

We have striven to build lives, sacrificed and saved for our children only to see our futures washed away like sand castles under the waves.

We long for the promise: safety, peace.

We are a frightened people afraid of shadows, things that go bump in the night.

We fear of the stranger down the street, the neighbor we do not know, feeling unsafe on our sidewalks, disquieted behind our closed doors.

We long for the promise: safety, peace.

We are a warring people with enemies all around us, threatening us, tormenting us.

We send our young men and women into harm way to keep our adversaries far away.

We long for the promise: safety, peace.

The promised One, The Righteous Branch Comes.  
The One who will fulfill us, show us to the abundant life of mercy and giving and forgiving and healing.

The promised One, The Righteous Branch Comes.

The One, who will shelter us, calm the storms, quiet the seas and bring to safe harbor.

The promised One, The Righteous Branch, Comes.

The One who will bring justice, who break the rod, restrain the warrior and bring the reign of Shalom.

We wait for the promised One, The Righteous Branch comes.

Come thou Long Expected Jesus; The One who comes in the Name of the Lord.

Come, Lord Jesus, come! Come now.  
Amen.

There is an experience in life which is common for us all. This one experience requires patience, causes anxiety, and creates an increase in our adrenalin levels - that "fight or flight" hormone found in our bloodstream. This one experience in life carries with it three significant parts: despair, hope, fulfillment. The experience of which we speak today is waiting, the stuff of which the Advent season is made of. Today we greet the

season with the words of God as shared with the prophet Jeremiah, a person for whom the experience of waiting was a controlling entity in his life.

Jeremiah comes to us from a time of despair. The Holy City of Jerusalem is threatened by enemies with and without. The city has fallen from grace and Jeremiah is sent by God to tell the people of the consequences of their behavior and to "clean up" their act. Within the Book of Jeremiah we read of a God ready to allow the destruction of a morally, ethically, politically, and spiritually impaired and fallen Holy City of Jerusalem. God speaks to Jeremiah of God's despair in God's waiting time for his children to turn from evil. Jeremiah's role in God's waiting time was to prophecy God's word of sorrow, destruction, captivity and yet, hope and forgiveness and salvation for a people God loves. During the waiting years while the Holy City of Jerusalem, its kings, leaders and priests fail to heed God's message through Jeremiah, God continues to offer hope and eventual salvation despite the coming destruction which Jerusalem is bringing on itself. Despair abounds in the waiting time but...so does hope, and thus today's reading. Let us hear again the words of God through the prophet Jeremiah.

4'Behold, (A)days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will (B)fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

15'In those days and at that time I will cause a (C)righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute (D)justice and righteousness on the earth.

16'In those days (E)Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the (F)LORD is our righteousness.'

Hope is a constant in the words from God to Jeremiah for the waiting time of the Israelites as they travel through anarchy to destruction to captivity and to restoration as a nation. God offers hope in a message of fulfillment not yet realized, for a time not yet seen but hoped for. This Advent season during our mid week services we will be contemplating what waiting means to us as seen through the story of Jeremiah.

What does this have to do with our time, our Advent, our Christmas? What is the connection between a dying Jerusalem, a prophet and a waiting message of a time not yet seen from the Gospel of Luke?

Luke's text reminds us that we too are in a waiting time, waiting for the final coming of the King of Kings. In this Advent season we await his birth so that we might await his final coming, his return in glory. It is a dizzying thought for most people, so much so that we just put up the blue or purple candles, read the texts and wait for Christmas without pausing to understand despair, hope and the expectant fulfillment of the waiting time. Advent becomes a waiting game marked by the secular events of what is now called by the general population, the winter holiday. In the waiting time of Advent Christians are called to such prophetic texts like the one in Jeremiah to help us remember what we are waiting for. The golden nugget in this waiting time is how we do the waiting. Do we wait well with prayer, worship and service to our fellow humans so that Advent becomes more about the Christ in our lives and less about the stuff in our lives? The engagement of despair over our sinful selves, the hope as seen in the cross of Christ and the fulfillment of his promise to return and take us home is the stuff of which Advent is made of. The waiting time is best done together because waiting by its nature is hard work. How are we planning to spend our waiting time this Advent season as a community in Christ? Come to the altar of your Lord this season so that we might wait well together for the King.

Let us Pray:

Come Lord Jesus, come as King. Rule in our hearts, come as love. Rule in our minds, come as peace. Rule our actions, come as power. Rule in our days, come as joy. Rule in our darkness, come as light. Rule in our bodies, come as health. Rule in our labors, come as hope. Thy Kingdom come among us. (David

Adam)