

“SIGNS AND SEASONS: LIVING FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD!!”

Advent 2B

December 7, 2014

Peace Lutheran • Grass Valley, CA • Pastor Tom Miller

Joke:

“God is it true that for you a thousand years is like a day?”

“Yes!”

“God is it true that for you a million dollars is like a paving brick?”

“Yes.”

“So, can I borrow a paving brick for a day?”

“Sure, just give me a sec.”

TEACHING POINTS:

1. Waiting. Waiting is hard.
2. We live “in wait”.
3. Living in wait is like waiting for a parade to begin.
4. John is the color guard who announces His coming.
5. “Advent is a journey into the darkness so that we can come to the full light of Christ.”

During the children’s sermon at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Lafayette, IN, the pastor asked the children about their favorite color of Christmas wrapping paper. After the usual answers of red, green, gold and “santa claused”, one little child piped up: “CLEAR!!” {The Lutheran (Feb 2005, pg. 3), Sue Lambert}

I could have been that one. You see, I’m the one who doesn’t have the patience to wait. In fact, I don’t think that I opened a package in my life without knowing what was inside first. I’m a squeezer, rattler, shaker, “peeker”, and when all else fails I’ll even split the paper for a “inside look.” Don’t tell my Dad—but I suspect my parents knew all along.

Most of us aren’t very good at waiting. We don’t like waiting for things to happen, for the next event. We don’t like waiting in line or waiting for appointments. We don’t like waiting at the stop light or for congested traffic.

Advent is about waiting. Advent is about a journey into the darkness (almost literally as we approach the shortest day of the year) so that we can be ready for the Light of Christ. Advent is about waiting both for eternity, and waiting for the first light that God sent into the world in Jesus. Advent is all about waiting.

More specifically, Advent is about **living in wait**. It is about living in this “in-between” time”, this sort of mixed up time with Christmas going on all around us

while we wait for God. It a time of living in wait for the lights in the darkness to make their full circle on the advent wreath. It about living in wait in the darkness for the full light to the Christ Candle. It is about living in wait for the trumpet sound of God's coming, for God's light for the world.

We live in wait. So, the question then becomes, how do we wait?

The scripture gives us a couple of hints about living life as we wait, about preparing a road, a highway for God, about announcing the kingdom of God in our midst. It gives us some hints for this Advent journey, which I've come to believe – this Advent journey like waiting for a parade.

Last evening we took in the annual Fair Oaks Parade and Tree Lighting ceremony. Like other places where we have lived, the parade route was filled with people. People who have staked out their favorite viewing spot with camp chairs, with blankets so they could have prime viewing.

Parades always have a time of waiting. There is the anticipation of the beginning of the parade. There is waiting for the first signs of the parade, seeing them come around the corner. Waiting for the first sounds--the sirens and the bands--that the parade was coming close.

Have you ever watched people waiting for a parade? It seems like there are two kinds of people.

On the one hand is the person who parks their chair right on the curb and sits. Stares straight ahead with arms crossed. Just waiting. Stoically waiting. Not excited, not anxious. Just sitting. Mingling around this person are other adults, chatting, oblivious. Also waiting.

On the other hand, there are the children. Children are full of excitement. They know there is a parade. They are alert to the sounds around them. They play their games. They do children's business in fun and, often, crazy ways. Periodically one will dart into the street to look up and down, to perhaps peer intently to see if there are any signs or hints that the parade is near. They are checking to see if time has arrived to stop and watch.

Finally, they see it. They see the color guard coming around the corner at the end of the block. They hear the band sounds echoing down the street. They can hear that the wailing sirens are close. Then they settle into their places. Antsy, full of energy, eager with anticipation, but settled in their viewing spot.

Advent "living is wait" is like children waiting for a parade. Our living in Advent wait can be like that: going about the business of life. It is about living, coming and going, doing and acting, serving and ministering while we wait. Living in wait is being involved in the business of life while periodically peering into the darkness to see if the light is drawing near.

Today, we hear the story of John the Baptist. The one who announces Jesus coming. I have a sense that John the Baptist is like that first glimpse of the color guard coming round the corner in the parade. John the Baptist, the way Mark frames it (remember and note that as Mark frames it, John is a way preparer for Jesus' Baptism, not his Birth) is the forerunner, the one preparing the way. The one who is out in the desert preparing the way of the Lord. John is the one whose message echoes down the streets of time. The Savior is near. God's grand parade of love is beginning.

John, then, is seen as one doing what Isaiah prophesied, doing the way preparing. For Isaiah, it was a different kind of way preparing. It was a time of making a straight and level path for the King. A path that was level and easy for the caravan to travel upon. A path that was straight and level and thereby free of the dangers of places for marauders to hide and jump the caravan.

Then too, I have to suspect that these workers lifted their eyes from time to time, they turned their heads from time to time to see if the king was coming. To see if there were any signs that the caravan was on its way. While they went about their work, I suspect that they were anxious to see the caravan arriving.

For you and I, Advent is a symbolic journey into the darkness. It is a symbolic journey, literally, into the darkest days of the year. It is a symbolic journey into our hearts to see that God's coming is about our need for salvation, our need for light in our sin. **Advent is this journey into the darkness to that we can come to the light of the world.**

During this journey, during our living in wait, we are to live. We are to be about our business, our mission, our ministry and our purpose. We are to be about preparing. But all the while, we look up and peer, looking for signs of the coming light.

We peer at the growing circle of light on the advent wreath.

We peer into our spirits as we engage in faith disciplines of prayer, worship, study, fellowship, generosity and service.

We peer into the eyes of our loved ones, looking for the spark that hints of the coming light.

We look for signs of His light in the carols, in the programs, in our worship.

We look for signs of His coming deep in our own spirits.

We look to the messengers in our lives to catch glimpses of light.

Advent is about "living in wait." It is about our living, and watching and waiting along the journey into the darkness so that we can be prepared to come into the full light of Christ, the Light of the world.

And so that we can become Christ's light to the world. Amen.