

## Mark 13:24-37

- It's something we hate to do.
- It's something most of us don't do well but which we all end up doing more than we care to admit.
- That "something" is "waiting."
- Think of the many examples of waiting in our daily lives.
- We stand in line at the post office, waiting for the next available clerk.
- The voice on the other end of the phone line says, "Thanks for calling; can you hold, please?"
- The host at the restaurant tells the hungry customer there will be a twenty-minute wait for a table.
- Sitting in the "waiting room" of the doctor's office.
- Waiting 9 months for a baby to be born.
- With waiting comes the concept of time.
- Time is strange, isn't it?
- It goes by extraordinarily fast when you want it to take its time or
- painfully slow when you need it, so very desperately, to move forward as fast as possible.
- There are moments that seem to suspend time, as if the world itself is circling your own orbit.
- We can recall plenty of quotes about time,
- "time heals all wounds;"
- "all in good time;"
- "time will tell;"

- “stand the test of time;”
- “time is of the essence.”
- All of which appear to be attempts to make our mark on time or to regulate time to our benefit.
- Whether we care to admit it in this instant-gratification, drive-thru-window, two-minute-oatmeal, microwaveable, instant-credit-approval society,
- we are a waiting people.
- and no other season in the church year is more filled with the theme of waiting than Advent.
- We wait and prepare for the promised coming of the child of Bethlehem.
- We are waiting for Christmas!
- For some, this waiting means active preparation and excitement.
- For others, it means a deep loneliness, missing loved ones, and a reality far different from the tranquil Christmas postcard.
- This year may look even more different with distance, illness, and the wonderings of the unknown.
- Nevertheless, We wait and hope for a renewed experience of God-with-us, for a renewed assurance of Christ’s presence.
- Our role as disciples of Jesus is one of *hopeful* waiting.
- And in our waiting, we hear of a promise.
- “The Lord will come”

- It's a promise spoken by a God who by a simple phrase created all things.
- It's a promise from a God we know to be true to God's word – a word which becomes flesh and dwells among us.
- But not only are we waiting, we are told to keep watch, stay awake, for when don't know when this will take place!
- keep watching, to keep waiting, and to keep vigilant until that hour comes.
- Can we keep watch in this waiting?
- "I don't want to stay awake".
- I'm weary and fatigued. Quite literally for me today...
- We need to keep relying on the community to help us keep watch when fatigue keeps us from holding our eyes open.
- Relying on that same community to remind us that we do not have a heart of stone,
- and that this is a vulnerable and tender time in the midst of the world to await the coming of Christ in all of Christ's vulnerability.
- God reminds us that we are all vulnerable, and that God fully experienced that power in perfect weakness and vulnerability.
- There was the unexpected hour over two thousand years ago when so many were asleep in Bethlehem.
- That hour, when God unexpectedly *broke into* our world.

- That hour, God broke into our world as a baby in a manger, not clothed in majesty and power, but in the *unexpectedness* of utter humility, helplessness, and vulnerability.
- *As people in Advent, we cannot write off that unexpected hour and the vulnerability that comes with it.*
- Jesus was here, and Jesus is coming back.
- We may have questions, doubts, and uncertainties about that day, about that hour.
- Will it be today?
- Or do we continue to wait, fight to keep awake... and dare to hope?
- And that's normal when we're facing our own vulnerabilities, things we don't understand, especially when it comes to something like God's timing.
- So how do we wait as vulnerable, "don't like to wait" faithful disciples?
- With HOPE.
- Two illustrations from our Gospel make the point.
- When a tree buds, it is obvious that summer is coming.
- In the same way, faithful disciples are called to be hope-filled – to look for signs of God's presence,
- even in the midst of suffering.
- We are to be vigilant, as the brief parable tells us of a servant anticipating the owner's return
- We lit the first candle on the wreath today, which represents hope.

- As we worship, and are drawn to the light, may we find how much we need to reconnect with hope.
- Whether we as waiting people, pace the floors, bite our nails, keep our minds busy on other things to stay distracted,
- May God slip in and out of those moments of waiting and reveal God's promise of light, hope, and life-renewed.
- So, Let's lean in, and wait together, with hope.