

Pastor Mollie's Sermon
December 1, 2019
Matthew 24:36-44

We all do it.

It's something most of us 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.

We wait and hope for a renewed experience of God-with-us, for a renewed knowledge of Christ's presence.

Our "Advent attitude" 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 the 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 of wandering and wondering.

Of watching and waiting.

Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.

That doesn't mean live in fear.

It does mean live in awareness.

It means: Wake-up...

Live this day... live this new year... in hope as we wait.

And in all the day to day stuff... our waiting can't be done alone.

We need to keep relying on the community to help us keep watch when fatigue keeps us from holding our eyes open.

Jesus knows we get distracted. He knows we get bored.

He knows we are human.

He is human, too. Every organ, every cell, every atom of his body is flesh of our flesh.

We are reminded that we are all vulnerable, and that God fully experienced that power in perfect weakness and vulnerability, through Jesus.

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 came to us as a baby, lived on earth, died, rose again, and holds a promise that he will return.

Of course we don't know the day or the hour.

That's not for us to know.

We may have questions, doubts, and uncertainties about that day, about that hour.

So we continue to wait, with questions and uncertainties, and 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.

We light the first candle on the wreath today, which represents hope.

As we worship together this first Sunday in Advent, 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 the promise of light, hope, and life-renewed.

So, Let's lean in, and wait together, with hope.