

Ad Te Levavi (1st Sunday in Advent): November 29th 2020
“Wait for It”

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The first Sunday in Advent is known by its Latin name: Ad Te Levavi; which means, “To you, I lift up.” In our Gospel reading, we are reminded of our coming King, “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.” As the King rides by, we cry out, “Hosanna. Lord, save us now.” But just who is this King, and from what do we need to be saved?

There are many answers for which we are still waiting. Advent is the season of waiting, and this past year has been the year of patience. We must wait for normal to begin. We must wait for a vaccine. We must wait for election results. We must wait for the toilet paper to return. Now as Thanksgiving is past, we wait to see if we are legally allowed to celebrate Christmas. We wait to see what will happen with school, and the economy. We even wait to see what will be under our trees at Christmas.

We are not a very patient people, and we don’t like to wait. We must have it right now. We do this in the world. We charge the government for working too slow. We lodge complaints at the package delivery systems for their lack of hustle. We lament the long lines we must endure to buy our loaves of bread, “They have all of these checkouts, and only one person working?”

The same spirit of impatience is brought into the church. We wait to celebrate the arrival of the Christ-child. The birth of Jesus is great news, and we just can’t wait to sing with the angels and gawk with the shepherds. As the day draws near, you can feel the intensity building, and we just cannot help ourselves. We forget to properly prepare, and then what happens when the time for waiting is over? We rush around not enjoying any of the moments at all. We are just glad that the whole thing is over, so we give one glad shout and then need to recover, confessing with Clark Griswold, “Thank the Lord! Hallelujah! Get the Tylenol.”

Waiting is an important biblical concept. Our texts and hymns during the season of Advent are magnificent. While we wait, we don't just wait doing nothing. We don't simply sit and twiddle our thumbs. We do what we are called to do. We pray. We pray the words of David, ***"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame."***¹

This is echoed in our Collect for the Day: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance."

Waiting belongs to the people of God. Adam and Eve waited for the Savior to come. Noah waited for the rains to come, then waited for the waters to subside. Abraham waited for the promise of a son to be fulfilled. Joseph waited for deliverance. Israel waited for deliverance from Egypt. Even after their liberation from Pharaoh and his oppressive hoard, they waited for many years wandering in the wilderness before they reached the Promised Land. Once in the Promised Land, they waited for peace from war, and security from their enemies until God blessed them during the time of Solomon. Through all these times, there was one promise for which they continued to wait, ***"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'"***²

The people of Judah were not just waiting for the ballots to be counted and a king to be declared. They were waiting on THE KING, the Promised Seed to Adam and Eve, the King to come from David's line. This King would be a righteous branch. He would judge with heavenly wisdom, and execute perfect justice.

While they waited, they got lost. Their impatience in waiting caused them to forget for whom they were waiting. They knew there was a Messiah who was promised, and they knew that God would send them a King. This they shouted as Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

¹ Psalm 25:1-3

² Jeremiah 23:5-6

As they were not properly prepared, they jumped straight to the celebration. In their fatigue and impatience, results didn't come as quickly as they wanted. The shouts of Hosanna quickly turn to crucify Him!

We see they were waiting, but not for the King Jesus truly was. They wanted something different, something more earthly, someone who would deal with the Romans. They waited for the righteous branch, and determined it must be a strong and decisive branch of military and political might. With strong words and military might, they waited for a social activist who would end the wait, cease the preparation, and usher in a new era of partying with powerful prowess. They wanted a king who would execute justice, as long as it served their own purposes.

What did they get? A man riding on a donkey. A man weak and humble. A man who would die, and quite easily. They believed the wait was over and the military conquest to win freedom was marching down the street; the time had finally come. Yet, this man spoke a few days, couldn't be found one day, then easily gave Himself over to death. He didn't even let His closest followers fight for Him; when they tried, He told them to put their weapons away. Instead of the Righteous Branch, the Promised Seed, as given by God, the people invented a messiah of their own imaginations. They forgot just from what they needed rescue.

This Advent, we continue in our waiting. We know that Jesus has come. We know the Righteous Branch has been sent, and we wait for His coming again in all His glory. As we wait, have we lost our way? Have we become so impatient that we forgot just for whom we are waiting? What are expecting of this Promised Seed? Some want a Jesus who will make them happier in this life, defined by the amount of money they have, the amount of health they have, or the amount of brain-power they have. Others expect a Jesus who will change the status of the current culture. Some want a Jesus who will do nothing but work for social justice, others want a Jesus who will flex His military muscle or political proficiency. Some are waiting for a Jesus to bring the perfect box under the tree, others are waiting for Jesus to make things so clear that even "those guys over there get it."

Sadly, how often we turn from crying Jesus as Son of God and the Promised Seed, to crucify Him! We receive a blessing from God, and sing His praises. He answers a prayer in our favor, and we say a deep and hearty, Thank You.

But when something doesn't go exactly the way we want it, we doubt. We turn away. We want God to dispense swift justice, as long it is not directed at me. When our neighbors, or our enemies, seem to enjoy success, we determine that this Jesus just isn't the guy we are looking for and this is not the God for whom we are waiting. Here in Grinnell, we have over 30 different ideas of God being promulgated, and so if you don't like what He has to say, it is very simple to run to another god, one who fills your self-ideas, self-serving expectations, or your selfish feelings.

For whom do we wait? Jesus of course. What does this mean? This is where your bible is important. The Word of God gives us exactly what we are to expect. Hebrew is great to put this together. Jeremiah mentions the righteous Branch. This combines two important words. Righteous means morally right. It is the absolute right in all things at all times. Branch of course comes from a tree, and from where does a tree come? A Seed!

Hear again these words spoken by God to the devil in the presence of Adam and Eve, just after the Fall into sin, "***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.***"³ There is a divide between the righteous and the evil. As seeds sprout and grow fruit, so the seeds of both the wicked and the good will bear fruit. There is right and there is wrong. There is only one who can determine. The seed of the woman will be of such a divide from the evil seed of Satan, that only God can make it happen. Sin corrupted mankind so completely that God must rescue.

Just how is He going to rescue mankind? He is going to use the Promised Seed of woman, from the very one of whom bears His own image. From the very seed of woman, two promises are given directly to King David, "***I will raise up your seed after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.***"⁴ The seed will come from the body of mankind, and a kingdom is to be expected. In this Kingdom the King will rule with perfect justice, according to the word of God.

³ Genesis 3:15

⁴ 2 Samuel 7:12

Second, of this Promised Seed it is said, “***He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.***”⁵ This promise is first fulfilled in the building of the Temple. Jesus teaches that He is the temple, the fulfillment of the temple, when He says He will rebuild it in three days.

The right hand of God, the always right and perfect, sinless Son of God became man and was born of human flesh. He became sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God. He came in humility, and perfect justice was executed on the sinless Lamb who bore the wrath of God’s judgment against sin on the cross. While the world waited for one to save them from whatever they deemed needing saving, Jesus was waiting for the perfect time of fulfillment. While hearts were full of sin, the world was full of death, and rooms were filled with people enjoying the comforts they devised for themselves, Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. While the world waited for relief from Roman occupation, Jesus gave relief from everlasting dominion of Satan. While the world waited for life to change for their own version of betterment, Jesus died to give eternal life.

The Righteous Branch, the Promised Seed, came. You proclaim this simple truth with very simple symbols made from trees. The manger and the cross are both branches that were crafted to bear the Promised Seed. Those objects of wood remind us just where our salvation lies, and how securely we dwell in Christ through faith. Just as Jesus lay safe and secure wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger, so we lay safe and secure in the waters of baptism. We are wrapped in the robe of Christ’s righteousness that covers all our sin. Here we snugly rest soundly in the wooden manger of the church hearing the voice of the Father’s love and our mother’s nurturing.

As Jesus was securely nailed to the cross to die, so are we securely in Christ to live. In Him, we dwell—that is live, and move, and have our being. We don’t want to save ourselves. We don’t wait for retribution. We don’t wait for justice to take place. He has come. Justice has been executed—Jesus has been crucified.

⁵ 1 Chronicles 17:12

While we wait for His coming, we need not wait for forgiveness. He comes now. As the blood flowed from the securing nails in Jesus' hands and feet, that same blood flows through the chalice into your mouth, drowning your sins and feeding you His own life-giving blood.

On this first Sunday of Advent, to God we lift up. We lift up our eyes to hills in the midst of sin and death and wrong expectations. We wait, and while we wait, He comes, for your everlasting good. While we wait, we pray the baptismal Psalm,

“I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;

he who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, he who keeps Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;

the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;

he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep

your going out and your coming in

from this time forth and forevermore.”⁶ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

⁶ Psalm 121:1-8

Prayer of the Church—Responsive Form
First Sunday in Advent (Ad Te Levavi)
29 November 2020

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. To You, O Lord, we lift up our souls and in You we put our trust. As we wait, do not let us be ashamed of our hope, or grow impatient in our waiting, so that we do not forget just for whom we wait; sustain us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may have joy at the advent of Christ, our Savior. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, awaken Your saints from sleep and idleness as we enter another Church Year. Encourage the preachers of Your Word and all who hear, for salvation is nearer us now than when we first believed. Give boldness and faithfulness to Matthew, our Synod president; Brian, our district president; Sam, our circuit visitor; and all pastors in Christ. Renew the faith and quicken the love of all Christians to cast off the works of darkness, put on Jesus Christ and live as children of the eternal day. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, preserve and bless all Christian households, that husbands and wives would live in love and service to each other, that fathers and mothers would diligently bring up their children in Your fear, and that children would honor their parents and be well equipped for service to their neighbors in this life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, be with the governing authorities and enable them to preserve peace and order in our nation. Hear our prayers for Donald, our president; Kim, our governor; our military and police; and other civil servants as well as all newly elected officials. Increase a spirit of unity and cooperation among the people of our land and the nations of the world. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate Lord, behold in mercy all who are shut-in, homebound, in any danger, trouble, sickness, recovering, or in need. Hear our prayers on behalf of [*Carmen, Susan, Pastor Brian Saunders, Linda Freese, Bob Boyle, Esther, Zoey, Jen Zebuhr, Gordon Robbins, Marvin Karstens, Keith Teggatz, Mary Ann Teggatz and those we name in our hearts*]. Give health to our world and bring the pandemic to an end. Comfort all who mourn, and sustain them with a confident hope in the resurrection. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You have promised to send Your holy angels to guard and keep Your children. We thank and praise You for the gift of life and for the protection and care you have provided as *Oliver and Jenna* celebrate their birthdays. Grant that they may grow in grace, continue to know Your loving-kindness, abide in the confession of Your care and protection, serve You faithfully all the days of their life and finally come to the fullness of Your joys in heaven; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal Lord, as Your Son once entered humbly into Jerusalem to cries of “Hosanna,” so send Him to us according to His promise in the Holy Sacrament, that we may eat His body and drink His blood in repentance and faith for the forgiveness of our sins and in the unity of a true confession. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**