

The Reverend Joshua D. Rinas
 Second Sunday of Advent, Year B
 Isaiah 40:1-11
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (13)
 2 Peter 3:8-15a
 Mark 1:1-8

Waiting, Preparing: Making Paths Straight

This is the second Sunday of Advent—another candle on the Advent wreath has been lit this morning... As many of you know, there are often candles of two colors on the Advent Wreath—three of blue or purple and one in pink.

The two colors of the candles indicate a tension within this season-- On one hand, the blue or purple represent the time of waiting and preparing. Penitence, being self-aware and sorrowful for one's faults, was emphasized in the past for this season. The pink or rose-colored candle symbolizes **Joy** at the soon Advent of the Christ. Lit either on the third or fourth Sunday, the pink Advent candle is used to mark the joy at the impending Nativity of Jesus.

Today, we Christians usually emphasize waiting and preparing...

On the other hand, the Advent Season is also about JOY, and lest we become too somber, too worried about preparing a proper entrance for Jesus into the world... We have the Sunday of Joy—for we must remember that even though we are waiting in this season for when we will celebrate Jesus' birth and even though we are waiting and preparing for Jesus' second coming... Jesus has ALREADY come into the world—not only 19 hundred-ninety years ago, but that God has remained in the world in the form of the Holy Spirit ever since...

Pastor Christian Coon has written about one particular parishioner he had...

“Eleanor's hair has tight curls. She walks with a slight limp and smells a bit of cigarette smoke. She also has one of the greatest conversion stories I've ever heard, complete with a voice waking her up in the middle of a night as she slept underneath a wall hanging featuring a cross-eyed Jesus with donkeys on his shoulder.”

“Eleanor is an artist, which may help to explain her exuberant and quirky faith. She also battles depression, and her husband desperately needs a new liver. When she plopped down in a chair in my office the other day, she clearly lacked the exuberance I've come to love. She needed comfort and tender speech, much like Jerusalem does in the passage from Isaiah.”

“As we talked about everything she was going through, Eleanor told me that she'd been hearing a voice assuring her that she will be comforted, and she sensed that she was being invited into God's bosom. But she also knew the reality of her situation. Her emotional state was fragile, and her husband's physical condition was tenuous. She didn't need to be convinced that all people are grass and that grass withers.”

“However one wants to interpret the "voices" in this passage (members of a heavenly council?), they seem to express the totality of the human condition. They encourage action, remind the listener of God's glory, state the naked truth about how fragile we are and proclaim God's ultimate victory—which includes a homecoming, when the listener is finally in the arms of God.”

“At times these varied voices are overwhelming, simply too much to take in. I know they are for Eleanor. But as difficult as it is for her to wait for her depression to subside, and as anxious as she is for that phone call to come telling her that her husband has a new liver, she knows she needs those voices. In the end, they promise a transformed life and a transformed world. Meanwhile, she waits and she listens.”¹

This year, we are waiting on a lot. Coronavirus numbers. Vaccines. Safe gatherings. Coffee hours. Healthy friends. Sanity in politics. Schools reopening. The end of civil unrest.

We Christians live in a faith of paradoxes. We are a people who live both in the **ALREADY** and the **NOT-YET**. God has already come in the form of a Son, Jesus. Given to us on earth so that we would have some idea of just how much God loves us!

And yet, we live in a time where we desperately await change. We repeat a refrain: we want normal back. And so, we remain – in wait. We wait. We wear masks and stay away. We pray. We work for peace and hope. We wait for things to change.

Jesus no longer walks around on earth as a man-- But, has promised to return! He has promised to come back and usher in the Kingdom of God.

¹ Christian Coon is the pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Deerfield, Illinois. A contributor to [365 Meditations for Men by Men](#) (Abingdon), he blogs at [GenXRev](#). <http://www.theolog.org/blog/2008/12/blogging-toward-sunday-hearing-voices.html>
Rinas, 6 December 2020, Matt.1.1-8, Advent 2 B

We know not when Christ will return—we don't know whether it will be within the next two and a half weeks—but in 19 days, we will celebrate Jesus' coming into the world the first time—as a baby boy...

Maybe this year, we've never needed Christ to come just so much.

Let us go make our paths straight and get right with God. Christ is coming—soon.

Amen.