

Use Time Wisely While Waiting

Message for Sunday, December 2, 2018
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16 Luke 21:25-31

Children's Message:

Do you see how the decorations around the room have changed? It's because Christmas is coming soon. Christmas is the time when Jesus was born. Every Sunday from now until Christmas, we will spend time thinking about Jesus coming. In the Church, we call this time of year "Advent." We'll sing songs about Jesus, and read in the Bible about Jesus. Of course, Jesus is the centre of our worship all year, but especially this time of year.

Today everyone received with their bulletin this paper: it's a calendar for Advent. Every day it has an idea for something you can do while you're waiting for Christmas. Some of these ideas need an adult to help, so you can talk about it with your parents.

Speaking of Christmas, Shari has some ideas on what people can give for Christmas. Let's listen for her...

Message: "Use Time Wisely While Waiting"

It's now four weeks and a couple of days until Christmas. Four weeks can seem like a long time to wait, if you're a child looking forward to presents, or an accident victim waiting to get rid of the cast on your leg.

Then again, four weeks can seem like a short time to wait, if you've just been told that's how long you have to live, before some incurable disease kills you.

The very activity of waiting can be boring or exciting, wasted time or useful time. I would like to think about two kinds of waiting.

1) Passive waiting

Passive means not doing anything; letting things happen to you. You're at the grocery store, and the person in front of you at the lineup has two carts jammed full of food, and you have to stand and wait. You can't use that time to fill up with gas or run an errand; all you can do is just let time pass.

This kind of waiting can be boring, a test of your patience.

2) Active waiting

Imagine a young couple expecting the birth of their first child. The baby is not waiting for anyone: it steadily develops, growing toes and hair. The baby has its own timetable. Even with all the current technology which can closely monitor the baby in the womb, the time of birth is determined by the baby, and not by the mother nor the midwife. When it comes down to the final days, it is simply a matter of waiting for the contractions to begin.

The parents, however, are not twiddling their thumbs while they are waiting. They scramble to prepare a room, obtain essentials like diapers, clothing, and a crib, and pester their more experienced friends and relatives with questions.

This kind of waiting is very active. It is anything but passive and boring. It can be hectic, exciting, even exhilarating. The anticipation is almost as joyful as the birth itself.

Waiting for Christmas is the active kind of waiting. We call this time of year in the Church "Advent." We remember God's promises to his people; and we remember how those promises have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And we look forward to the fulfillment of all the promises when Jesus returns one more time to bring justice and righteousness to the world.

God made many promises about the coming of a Saviour. The prophet Jeremiah was one of God's messengers.

Jeremiah 33:14-16

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

'In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line;

he will do what is just and right in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

This is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord our Righteousness." ' ' "

Jeremiah is quoting from his own prophecy made some time earlier, found in Jeremiah 23:5-6. But

God's promise of a good ruler from the descendants of King David goes back *much* further. Hundreds of years earlier, God promised David that there would always be one of his descendants as king. It is found in 2 Samuel 7:16.

That was the promise, and that's what happened. For four hundred years, there was a succession of twenty-one kings who ruled over Israel and then Judah, all from David's family. Most of them, however, were terrible leaders. They were greedy and corrupt; they didn't care about the people; they worshipped idols instead of God. Only a few were worthy of the name of David.

But now, Jeremiah gives the promise from God that there will be another King from David's line, but one who will be righteous: he will be fair, and just, not oppressing the poor like so many of the wicked kings.

This King will also be a Saviour. Through him, the people will live in safety.

Christians are those who see Jesus of Nazareth as the Saviour promised by God. His birth in Bethlehem was God keeping the promise.

The other passage we read this morning was from Luke 21:25-36. Jesus tells his followers that he is going to come once again to our world, to complete the work he has begun. The world will be in great turmoil with all kinds of wars and disasters happening, and people will be very afraid. Jesus gives them this promise:

Luke 21:28, New International Version:

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Advent is a time of waiting for Jesus to come again. But it is active waiting. We do our part wherever we are able, whenever we are able, with whomever we are able. God's Kingdom of love and peace may not rule the world, but we can show by our love and joy that we are part of that Kingdom, wherever we are.

Next Steps:

- Our human nature is to be self-centered. Ask Jesus to help you get beyond that, so you can live the Kingdom of God.
- Even in the grocery lineup. Smile to the person near you. Compliment the clerk on the fine job she is doing.
- Day by day, moment by moment, carry the love of Jesus with you and give it away to all you meet.

Even right now as we prepare for communion, take a moment to give a blessing to your neighbour in church.