

Waiting

Hope is Born: Part 1 “Waiting”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – November 29th, 2020

1st Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Reflection: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Greeting: A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Lighting the Advent Candle: The first Sunday of Advent we light the candle of hope in God’s presence with us. “Keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” (*Mark 13:35-37 NRSV**)
The first candle is lit.

Prayer: Eternal God, in your providence you made all ages a preparation for the kingdom of your Son. Make ready our hearts for the brightness of your glory and the fullness of your blessing in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 80

To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of Asaph. A Psalm. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. (Psalm 80:1-7,17-19 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 80 and hear a call for restoration. A call for repentance so that we may once again feel God’s saving grace. We hear of a people who have been waiting. Have you ever felt like you were waiting for God? Can you think of a time when you felt God was far away? When God was very near? How do you prepare your heart as you await the coming of the Lord? How do you prepare your heart for God’s love?

Prayer: Oh Lord, prepare our hearts in this season of advent. Bring us closer to you in all that we are. Help us to remember our Savior born into this world so that we may know your great love for us. Help us this season as we find hope in you. Help us to have the patience to wait. Bring us together in your joy and your mercy, that we may be born anew into your grace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Isaiah chapter 64, verses 1 through 9.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.
(Isaiah 64:1-9 NRSV*)

Our next reading is from 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 3 through 9.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
(1 Corinthians 1:3-9 NRSV*)

Our final reading is from Mark, chapter 13, verses 24 through 37.

“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”
(Mark 13:24-37 NRSV*)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Our first message in our Advent series, Hope is Born, is about waiting. I can't help but feel that talking about waiting is appropriate for this year, because it feels like we have all been waiting for a lot. This has not been an easy year for anyone. And I think that we need that hope that comes with Christ's birth, now more than ever. But our readings today do give us an idea that this isn't the first time that people have been in a situation where they really do need that hope. Our reading from Isaiah highlights this very well. Isaiah feels like the people have gone astray and don't know how to get back. But the one thing that Isaiah does remember is that God is there, that God is always there ready to help his people, to make them to mold them to help them to be better. And to help them to wait for what is to come. We hear it echoed again in First Corinthians that God is there always willing to help us. To give us what we need to strengthen us to build us up. And that God isn't going to give up on us. That the giving up is on our part. And I think it's important that we remember that, because it's easy sometimes to feel like we've been left alone, like we are going to struggle always on our own. And that feels very true this year. Especially when we are separated, not able to come together so that we can be safe, so that we may join together again. And sometimes it can be hard to wait, to have the patience we need. But I'm reminded of those people patiently waiting on God's deliverance that we read about in Scripture. I think it's hard because waiting also means accepting that not everything will be immediate not everything is going to be now. Sometimes we have to wait on things to come. We have to wait for God's time. And we don't know when that time is going to be. We hear that echoed in Mark. We are supposed to learn the lesson of the fig tree. “As soon as its branches become tender and puts forth its leaves you know that summer is near.” Sometimes we get too hung up on looking for our signs. And the message we get from Mark is that you may not always know exactly when, but keep your eyes open, keep awake. Don't just be waiting for something to come and not notice but keep looking for that hope. We get that last line. “I say to you, I say to you all: Keep awake.”

I have to say, I love advent. I love it because it's the time of hope and it's a time when our hope is reborn. Because we remember all the things that have come to pass, and all the things that will come to pass. And we remember that God has good in store for us. But that

sometimes we have to be patient. We can't force God's hand to make things happen right away, and that we can't make them happen at a time that isn't the right time. But that we have hope that there will be the right time, and that things will be good. Even when we think right now that maybe they never will be. But God is always there to give us that hope for a brighter tomorrow. So we become the people who wait. And some might say that it's odd that we talk about waiting when we talk about the birth of Christ into the world. One might say that's already happened, what are you waiting for? I say I'm waiting for that hope. Because, though we know that Christ was born into the world, we prepare our hearts for Christ coming into our lives once more, whether it's we are waiting for Christ to come in today, tomorrow, whether we are waiting for Christ to come again to set everything right, whether it's we're waiting for that reminder that God is with us. We are always waiting on Christ in some way to give us the hope that we need to face tomorrow. And it's important that we keep that hope alive.

This time of preparation during Advent helps us to put ourselves in the shoes of those waiting on God's deliverance, waiting on the Messiah to come. And the unexpectedness of how it happens. Because I think that's also an important thing for us to remember. With all the people waiting for a king with a strong hand to deliver them. That we remember hope that came in the form of a child born, not in a palace, but born in the little town of Bethlehem. Born not to people with power and influence. But born to a young couple scared and unsure. And I think that's very fitting right now. Hope doesn't always come the way that we're expecting it to, but hope comes. Hope doesn't always arrive full of power and full of might and everything that we expect it to be right off the bat. Hope can be born in the form of a child, helpless and in need of others and reminds us of our need for each other. And our need for Christ. Our need for God to be in our lives. Because it reminds us that hope can be a long game. And it requires us to join together to help one another. That we wait not as individuals, but we wait as a community of believers, looking out for each other. Caring for each other, doing what we must do to help keep each other safe. Doing what we need to do so that hope may arrive. It's important that we do our part, as we wait. I can see one of the ways that we're doing that right now. As I record this message alone, I don't do so because I want to be alone. I don't do so because I don't want to be with you. But I do so because of my love for all of you. I wait for the time that we may be joined together again, because I know that right now, I'm doing what we all must do so that we may join together again. That we may be a community of hope that we trust in each other and we trust in the Lord, that God will see us through, even if it's not what we expected, even if it's not what we wanted, even if it's not what we are wanting to do right now. We trust that God hasn't walked away from us. But that God is here to help us to get through what we must do. So, keep awake. Keep doing the things that we need to do so that we can do all the things that we wish to do, all the things that God has called us to do. That in this time of turmoil we find ways that we may bring hope to others, that we may help each other. Even if it's something new. Especially if it's something new.

Because really isn't that what Advent and Christmas are about? Finding hope in something new and unexpected? That we remember the birth of our Savior into this world as an act of love. God coming to be with us and our flesh to experience. Our feelings in our pain that we could see him, so that we could know he was with us. Not just appearing out of the blue and saying, Here I am believed but coming as a child was born into this life, who grew up, the same as we grow up, who walked to the same earth that we walk, spoke with the same tongue that we speak with that he could give us the hope that we need to carry on. And I'm reminded of the waiting. It wasn't a child that went out to speak. It wasn't a child that went out to give the good news. It was not a child that went to the cross that we would know God's love. But it was a child that was born into this world, to give us the hope that we need. There was waiting, waiting for that child to grow to become the man that would deliver us. That would save us from sin and death. Things don't always happen the way we want them to happen when we want them to happen. And that's okay, because we are given the hope that God is still with us. We are given the hope that the light is always there.

So, in this season of preparation, prepare your hearts for the unexpected by keeping awake and seeing what happens. Look for the good. Follow the light. Do all that we can so that we may do no harm, that we may do good, that we may continue to love God with all that we are, that we may wait. So, that Christ may be born into our hearts, that we may be born into a life in Christ, that we may be born into a life of hope. Knowing that as long as God is with us, there is always hope for a better tomorrow. And let us wait for Christ to come in final victory. But as we do so, let us never stop doing the work that needs to be done. Let us never stop loving as Christ loves us. Let us never stopped caring, the way that God cares for us. And let us be a people who wait for that hope to show itself. By keeping that hope alive in our hearts in all that we are and all that we do. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Lord Jesus Christ, you are the way of peace. Com into the brokenness of our lives and our land with your healing love. Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, melt our hard hearts and consume the pride and prejudice which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love, which casts out our fear, and bind us together in that unity which you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now in as a people of hope. We go with the blessings of the Father, in the peace of the Son, in communion with the Holy Spirit. Until we meet again.

Amen.

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers	Cindy Cisney
Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Bill Gilbert
Michael & Makenzie Reynolds		Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap
Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes	
Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center		Family of Dean Hawes	Family of Bud Mitchell

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Our Current Series – Hope is Born

This series is our Advent series of how Christ coming into the world fills us with hope.

November 29th – *Waiting* – Our first advent lesson is about learning to wait.

December 6th – *Preparing* – We are a people who prepare for the coming of the Lord.

December 13th – *Rejoicing* – God gives us reason to rejoice in all things.

December 20th – *Expecting* – We await what we know has come and is coming.

December 24th – *Becoming* – We not only celebrate hope, but we become it.

11/29/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! I'm returning with a weekly update this week because of a change in our situation here in Illinois.

We are suspending in person worship through December 13th. That may end up being extended, and I will have that information as soon as it is available.

As we enter the season of Advent, I am looking for anyone who would like to add anything to worship. Music, readings, prayers, or anything else that you'd like to add, please contact me. I would love to add whatever we can to the services. I also want to apologize, as I am trying to get things printed and emailed earlier in the week, but sometimes life happens.

I do want to give a special thanks to all of you that have been a part of our in-person services. Everyone has been doing a wonderful job of following the best safety practices and showing a love for each other that way. I am proud of you all, and thankful for all of you.

If you know someone who would like to receive printed information every week, please let me know. If you come to this online, feel free to share it.

The church is still active and working, and as such, still needs your financial support. Please contact me or the church treasurer for options. Thank you for your continued support.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus or the IDHP website for information about the current Illinois situation and restrictions.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

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