

Wait for What God has Ready

Advent 1: November 29, 2020
King of Glory Lutheran Church
Isaiah 64:1-9
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Advent is a time of waiting for the Lord to come again. All creation waits for the God we know to redeem all of creation and bring it healing. Slow doesn't mean no. God is one of certain promises. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, what God has ready for those who love him.

Isaiah 64:1-9

New Revised Standard Version

64 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

^{2[a]} 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!

³ When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.^[b]

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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^[c] us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸ Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹ Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Is anybody out there tired of waiting? I am. I bet you are too. Perhaps it is only our military veterans and citizens who have lived through the days of WWI and WWII who can truly understand waiting to be finished with world turmoil. Those wars were four and six years respectively. So many of us in 2020 have never experienced and don't understand living with that kind of uncertainty.... surviving while not knowing any outcome.

We're just struggling with month eight. Nine if we count March. You know what I'm talking about right? How long must we wear masks? Do the students really have to study from home again? Counting quarantine days... "I'm on day 10." New restrictions just this week. When will there be a vaccine? Great! Now we have several vaccines. Now when will we be able to get vaccines? Holy goodness! When Lord, when will it ever end? We are weary of waiting.

We are used to waiting during the four weeks of Advent. Time is marked as we light the candles advent wreath. Gathering the kids or grandkids around the living room table, we explain why we open only one square at a time on the Advent calendar. We help them learn to wait.

Now we don't want to wait. Neither did our ancestors from the ancient time. King Cyrus of Persia had ended Israel's Babylonian exile. Some Israelites were returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the Kingdom. There they encounter hardship. The hopeful and hoped for dreams in the previous chapters of Isaiah, now turn to words of lament.

Listen. **1** Oh, that you would rip open the heavens and descend, make the mountains shudder at your presence - **2** As when a forest catches fire, as when fire makes a pot to boil - **3** To shock your enemies into facing you, make the nations shake in their boots!

Are any of us feeling that way? God! God why don't you just stop all of this heartache and grief and loneliness and.... For ancient Israel, God is seemingly absent. The people cry out that God make an appearance! You've been absent for so long.

Then, then they recall the radical ways God did show up. You did terrible things we never expected, descended and made the mountains shudder at your presence.

They know God is powerful. They remember when God did appear. God helped David kill Goliath. The wall fell at Jericho. God had brought 12 plagues upon the Egyptians. "911 what is your emergency?" "Oh a couple million flies, boils and knats to make Pharaoh angry." Yes! God was in the salvation business.

But now? "911 – what is your emer..." The line goes dead. The line can never go dead at 911! Where is God?

It's not as if they don't know, they, God's chosen people, created most of the mess themselves. Listen: We've sinned and kept at it so long! Is there any hope for us? Can we be

saved? **6** We're all sin-infected, sin-contaminated. Our best efforts are grease-stained rags. We dry up like autumn leaves - sin-dried, we're blown off by the wind.

If nothing else, the pandemic has shown us how desperately we need to be rescued from the sticky web of sin. With a certain hopelessness we watch humanity destroying each other. Yelling. Spitting. Spirits so shriveled up there is seemingly no God life left in them. Creation is no different: acres upon acres burned to the crisp. Death has not only had a word, death has had 257,000 in our country alone.

When will God come to heal and redeem? To restore? To rejuvenate? To re-align and resuscitate all of Creation with Creator?

Isaiah offers hope: **4** Since before time began no one has ever imagined, no ear heard, no eye seen, a God like you who works for those who wait for him.

Ahh! There it is. The promise. When God does show up, God works for those who wait. For those who wait.

A watched pot never boils. Crock pots cook slow...because they are slow-cookers. Even minute rice still takes 5 minutes. You just cannot stand in front of the microwave yelling, "Hurry up!"

When will we learn that God comes on God time? Not human time. There better not be a clock in heaven because it would just mess with that whole 'eternity' idea!

As Christians we've heard it all before yes? God's chosen people had heard it as well. 'Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.' (Ps 27:14) (Isaiah 40:31) Those who wait for the Lord shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

So what is this waiting business all about? Rev Dr Christopher Davis of Tennessee got separated from his young son while they were Christmas shopping in Toys-R-Us. Frantically the father ran from aisle to aisle looking for the boy. Finally he went to a security guard. "Do you have surveillance? Do you have a monitor? Can I look at it? Will you scan the aisles for me?" They soon spotted the youngster sitting crying. The guard allowed the father to get on the store intercom.

"Christopher." The boy looked around recognizing the voice. Rev David continued, "Stay where you are. It's Daddy," I said. "Don't move. I see you although you can't see me. Stay where you are. I'm coming." (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/first-sunday-of-advent-2/commentary-on-isaiah-641-9-5>)

When we wait upon God, we must trust that God still sees us. God knows our every challenge. God will come in God's timing. 'No ear has heard, no eye has ever seen, a God like you who

shows up for those who wait.' Ever watched paint dry? Jello set? Glaciers move? It might be a very looonnngg wait. Remember God didn't create the clock. Humans did and God will act in God's time. We mustn't confuse slow with no.

There are times when we aren't ready. God may allow us as individuals or community to get a bit banged up. God may wait until we've gotten the speeding ticket and the DUI. Every off road experience doesn't mean God isn't there or watching. It only means that we're not ready to receive what God has planned for us.

God's Word is true. What God has said, God has said. 'No ear has heard, no eye has even seen, what God has ready for those who wait and love Him.' Think of a time when God did arrive, did deliver, did send you your heart's desire. For anyone who has ever received what God had planned, what God had in store, you know that God prepared and created every last detail even better than you could have ever imagined! God's Word is true!

Yes, indeed the Lord is worth waiting for. When God has prepared and provided what God has promised and produced, we all will say, "Well, that was worth waiting for!" Right? It's not even comparable to the country song which says you'll get the girl or the truck or the next dance. When God delivers, God delivers! More than your heart needs. Answers to prayer that you never could have designed. No matter what we have to go through, no matter what we have to endure, no matter how much it hurts now, God sees. God knows. God has promised. God will come.

No ear has heard. No eye has seen what God has ready for those who wait and love God. This is what Advent is about. It is one candle at a time. It is one square a day on the calendar. But it is so much more than that. The Advent, the coming of our Lord is at hand. While we wait, we have the opportunity to do our spiritual work. We stop to pray and read God's Word each day. We really listen for God's still small voice which does yet speak. We learn to sit in the silence that teaches us truths about ourselves and others. Grieving what has been and what is, we long in hope for God's promised future. Jesus is coming.

No ear has heard. No eye has seen. But God is ready for we who wait. Amen!

*Bible translation. The Message. Eugene Peterson. Nav Press. Colorado Springs, CO.

*Working Preacher Commentary on Isaiah 64 by Rev. Dr. Christopher Davis.