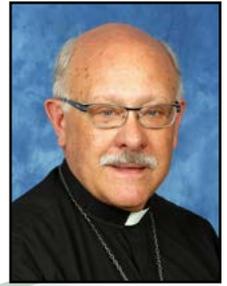




Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

First Sunday of Advent

December 2, 2018

What Do You Expect?

Luke 21:25-36

I am, I am told, a patient person! In fact, sometimes am reminded that I wait too long for a process to happen. As if to say, "Not to worry, it will all work out."

I believe that we live in impatient times. Often within the context of the faster I go, the more efficient I will be...get more accomplished...have more time for...do you identify with that at all?

Impatience and anxiety sometimes mesh and I/we long for resolution, time to pause and reflect, to stop and to live without the dread fear of missing out!

Advent is a time to refresh our sense of time. You sang it---in the face of all of the breaking/developing news in the making, the status bar changes of social media---we are called to---

"Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!"

For these next weeks---Advent to Epiphany---our operative question will be "What Child is This?" And we will have a time that will include a dose of waiting, on tip-toes, for the coming of the Lord.

That's the way it is for Christians, I think. Since the very earliest church, we Christians have watched Jesus work and been part of a mission given to the first disciples.

Year after year, we have taken note...listened to His teaching and noticed His wisdom, noticed his attentiveness to the need of the poor, those who could not hear or see, those for whom life was moved to live at the edges of sustainability in their days.

But, most of all, we watched him give new life where none seemed possible, to women, to children, to the mentally, physically broken. And have concluded that God's power for forgiveness and for life is present in this One from Nazareth and we ask "What Child is This?"

Listen! With the gift of time, we are waiting now for this man from God and that is, finally, what Christmas is all about...but, sometimes, we are called to wait!

It was so for the people of God in the time of Jeremiah; those who caravanned into the new land, but were often stalled in place or held captive in a strange land.

It was so for the covenant people who had been taken into Babylon; plucked up from the place where they trusted the LORD of promise lived in their midst.

They had kept the Law, grounded in Torah, but were about to learn that God had a better idea...a Messiah to come, Savior of the nations, to redeem the captive and to new life through the righteous gift of God.

What did THEY expect? Justice, peace, life lived within the new promises of the God who reached out to them with love, enfolding them into the promise of which Jesus would speak even in times when the world seemed in disarray, unraveling. A little like today!

Into every time comes this Son of Man to bring redemption, reconciliation, renewal which grounds us in courage and in mission. Did you hear? "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." The words of Jesus!

We know that our redemption is a done deal since that first Black Friday, we call "Good." We know that the shadow of the Cross stands at the Manger of Bethlehem. And that we are now called to alertness because we know and live into the signs of the times---the migrant at the border, the unsheltered at the side of the road, the hungry grazing at the dumpster, the wandering ones who have not yet heard or lived into the love we share in Jesus Christ; those who do not live learning and leaning on the everlasting arms of the God we have learned to call "Abba, Father;" the One nurturing the redeemed at the Font, in the Word, and the Table where the peace of the Lord reigns.

I went to the mail box this week; no more political "asks," but I received this: "BE. At the Bellevue Collection." And asked "What do I, what do WE expect?" With the sights and dollar signs of the season, I longed for four weeks of waiting! And lo and behold we are here to "Light one candle to watch for Messiah: (to) let the light banish darkness" and to live into the promise of the One who said "I am with you in all ways and to the ends of earth."

To be that of which Paul writes to an early congregation. It is a joyful letter and he longs to be with them, 24/7 praying for them, and he writes (Did you hear it?): "AND MAY THE LORD MAKE YOU INCREASE AND ABOUND IN LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL, JUST AS WE ABOUND IN LOVE FOR YOU."

One candle...lit...a meal shared; time to remember who we are because of whose we are and to celebrate that He came down that we may have LOVE, LIGHT, PEACE, JOY AND ONE ANOTHER.

BE PATIENT! We know who this child is! The greatest gift ever to be given and to be unwrapped and shared each day in every way until He comes again. And we at the intersections of life to be reconciled, to live shalom, and to be the whole people of God for the sake of the world.

Even, so, Come, Lord Jesus. Amen!