

First Sunday of Advent  
Year C

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-9

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

We wait. In traffic, we wait for the light to change. In the store, we wait to checkout. It seems like we spend more time waiting than doing. At times, I think this is a plot to keep our heart rate up as we try to get somewhere important, but we wait.

Advent is a time to wait. But, what are we waiting for? Popular culture would say we are waiting for Santa Claus. Many in the church would say we are waiting for the birth of the Christ Child. But our lessons today have us waiting for something else.

If Advent is a season of preparation, what are we preparing for? Again, popular culture would say we are waiting for Christmas to see if our loved ones got us the gift we have been hinting we want. Or, we are waiting with a little fear for the credit card bills to arrive and show us how badly we bought into the culture of overspending as a way of showing our love.

And we wait.

From our readings today, we find that Advent has us waiting for two different events. Yes, we are waiting for December 25<sup>th</sup>, when we can celebrate the birth of Jesus. Some see this as the high point of the Christian year, although we need to wait a few months for that day. But, we are also waiting for the fulfillment of time - for that day when Jesus will return to establish God's kingdom on earth. At least that is how some view this promise in Luke's Gospel.

But this is the first day of a new year in our calendar. We begin a new book study, we change the color of the frontal on the altar, we light the first candle on the Advent wreath, and we open the first window on our Advent calendar. And, not unlike how we celebrate the turn of the calendar on January 1, we might make new resolutions.

In the very first of the books of the New Testament to be written, we read how Paul is reacting to waiting to see the people of Thessalonica again. He is in continual prayer that the time will soon come that he might rejoin them and minister among them again. Paul offers a benediction to the people he loves so dearly. "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints."

Paul is asking God to help the people of Thessalonica to make a change - from celebrating the relationship he has with them to their growth in their relationship with one another and with God. The members of this congregation were worried about their loved ones who had died before the

return of Jesus. Paul is praying that they would move on from this, to quit worrying, and to seek the relationship with God that will ensure they will be ready when Jesus does return.

As the Thessalonians were, many of us are troubled by the events, or the state of the world around us. We also need to quit waiting and worrying about what might be and look to doing the work we always have before us. Throughout His ministry, Jesus told the people that the Kingdom of God was close at hand. He never said that the Kingdom of God would appear at the end of the age - it is already here. We live in the Kingdom of God because we are doing the work of God.

In this Advent season, as we revisit the role of the angels as they made their pronouncements 2000 years ago, let us look at our role we have as God's messengers. We proclaim the same message this Advent season - "fear not, the Lord is with you."

Let us make this our New Year's resolution for this Advent season - to tell the world to rejoice. The Kingdom of God is with us now.