

11-12 #2

## *Waiting for Peace*

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

Mark 1:1-8

2 Peter 3:8-15a

8 Don't let it escape your notice, dear friends, that with the Lord a single day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a single day. 9 The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a dreadful noise, the elements will be consumed by fire, and the earth and all the works done on it will be exposed.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be? You must live holy and godly lives, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming day of God. Because of that day, the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. 14 Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by him in peace – pure and faultless. 15 Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him.

Advent is a time of waiting and expectation and we have here today a text clearly about this theme. The author was writing to people who were confused because the end had not yet come, as they were expecting, and the leaders of the faith had to find a way to explain this. So we are told that spiritual time is different than our profane human concept of time, and that patience was what followers of Christ needed to focus on. God is not slow – but so wise that He is creating a perfect answer through patience and has actually started creating the answer to our needs before we even realize it. The patience of God should be our focus; because outside of that spiritual place of focus is fire and flames. God should find us at any time in peace; “But according to his promise we are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.”

Sharing God's patience IS salvation. Having the peace and the perspective to see the world as it is gives us and *actualizes* HOPE! Sacred patience is Hope and hope is life eternal. When we come to understand this we find how amazing it is that our God came to us in human form – because we are offered a path to salvation through a human giving us access to patience.

In every spiritual faith tradition patience is seen as being a vital gift. For it is in the conquering of our desires our reactions and our striving to overcome haste, that we become more like God.

The foundation of much of our anger can be traced to a form of impatience. Much violence can be traced back to the perpetrator being selfish and anxious. We wish to control other people and situations around us to meet our desires as we think of them, and when it doesn't happen, we find our tempers rising and the control over our mouths and thoughts slipping away. So much violence in the world today is as a result of lack of patience. Frustrations, fear, lack of control are all foundations for violence and the cure is patience. Yes, the cure for violence is patience.

Another way of looking at this is that our desire for control and our loss of patience is a result of being focused too much on ourselves. We often then 'should' on ourselves. We think that God's

kingdom on earth is for us and is somehow in our control. We do our best to make the most of our lives – we are focused and we have our goals in mind . . . and the next thing you know – something throws us off! And we wonder why we were thwarted in our good deeds! Where is God!? Not only is God not doing it – but we are stopped in our tracks.

And then, before we know it . . . the situation evolves into a place of profoundness – and we didn't even have to do anything. God was busy the entire time and we would have done well to just wait and watch hopefully and be with God in peace.

That is what we take these Sundays of Advent for – moments in the busy preparedness to remind ourselves of patience, of peace, of holiness and sacredness. Waiting for Peace is like trying to control stuttering. We have to catch ourselves, take a deep breath, move very carefully and slowly. Waiting – patience – being observant of the sounds and smells and people around us – that can sometimes be utterly amazing! Waiting is peace.

A great example of sacred waiting is pregnancy – Mary is with child in our story right now – waiting and watching her belly grow big; feeling that child move around inside of her, experiencing the miracle of that growth. You have got to learn patience when you are pregnant or you might go crazy! The time is drawing near, so there is a rising in anticipation – and yet, the fear of what could happen in the birthing process can make the mother think she might just be better off waiting.

Yet, even as she waits for the birthing process to begin, that child is very actively growing – things are developing in extraordinary ways under the heart of the mother. One can only see a fraction of those changes – lumps and bumps under the skin of her belly – or shadowy figures on a print out from an ultrasound. Things are happening and she has little control over them. Just as God is at work when we are not aware ~ and God's time is different than our time.

So we are called to strive for patience – to wait and be focused on trusting God right now, to strive for peace, because God wants to give everyone a chance to be saved. The path is set clearly here – patience – peace – being like God, this brings salvation.

Thomas Merton is quoted as having written, "Peace is not something you must hope for in the future. It is a deepening of the present, and unless you look for it in the present, you will never find it."

And this peace is what we are called to focus on today, this second Sunday in Advent. From, CONNECTIONS, 11-28-93 quote: "Life is a constant Advent season: we are continually waiting to become, to discover, to complete, to fulfill. Hope, struggle, fear, expectation and fulfillment are all part of our Advent experience. The world is not as just, not as loving, not as whole as we know it can and should be. But the coming of Christ and his presence among us – as one of us – give us reason to live in hope: that light will shatter the darkness, that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices, that we are never alone or abandoned. May this Advent season be a time for bringing hope, transformation and fulfillment into the Advent of our lives." AMEN