



SAINT MARK'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

B Advent 1, Waiting For The LORD

St. Mark's, Little Rock, 12-3-17

Danny Schieffler

Years ago there was an article in the paper
about a champion hunting dog
who loved to run.

And the story said

this dog was so fast

it could catch almost anything.

But one day when the owner

had the dog out on a hunt

the dog got to running so fast

when it caught up with the prey

rather than pursue the prey

the dog kept right on running

past it.

Apparently thinking

That the two of them were in a race

The dog completely forgot

What he was after

And kept right on running
all the way across the county line.

Where the poor dog

The next day

They finally found the poor dog
under the porch of somebody's house
completely exhausted.

Right now many of us in America

are suffering from an epidemic, a disease of busyness.

Its like we are running a race
but we have forgotten why.

We have forgotten what life is all about.

We have all the time in the world,

But it feels as though
we have none.

And that's why the season of Advent

at the beginning of a new church year

today

is a gift to us from God.

For in Advent

God calls us to hit the pause button

And to wait and to watch for Christ's coming.

Pause. Breathe, Wait

watching for Christ in our lives

Keeping awake

And Keeping alert to be sure
as the Scripture says
for Christ to come again.

But maybe even more important
as disciples of Christ in the 21st century
is to learn to live our lives differently than many in the world
and live in a way that we can see him
even now.

Waiting and especially
the phrase “waiting for the LORD”
is found all through the Bible
And it’s a stance towards life especially associated with Advent.

Traditionally, one of the ways to wait for the LORD
is Sabbath observance,
when we intentionally set aside time for God
1 day in 7
for worship
for learning about God
for rest .
for being with loved ones

In short, For things that renew us.

For things which bring delight to our lives.

Scripture teaches that Sabbath is so important
that even God rested on the Sabbath.

And apparently Go thought it was important for us too.

Because its in the middle of the 10 commandments
As important as

Thou shalt not worship other Gods

Thou shalt not steal

Thou shalt not commit adultery

Thou shalt not commit murder

Thou shalt not covet the things

which belong to your neighbor

Remember the Sabbath Day.

And Keep it Holy

that is keep it set apart for God.

One of the things I have observed

Is that if we do not get the Sabbath right in our priorities

the way we experience the rest of our time

begins to unravel

And over time

We may find ourselves spiritually adrift.

Though the Sabbath is the foundation of waiting upon the LORD

Another way is to make time for daily personal prayer

And no one can do for you and God

except you.

Many of us have heard of the Anglican three legged stool

as a metaphor for authority in our lives--

Scripture tradition and reason--

But there is also a three legged stool

for Anglican spirituality.

Weekly Eucharist

Daily personal Prayer

And the third leg

daily morning and evening prayer in community.

Jesus said wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name

I am there in the midst of them.

Advent is the perfect time

to try out MP or EP

We have them every day M-F

8:30 am and 5:30 pm.

Another way to wait upon the LORD

Is to create Sabbath moments

and pause at key moments during the day.

Lately, I've been trying out something new

Sometimes when moving from one activity to another

I'll take hold of the door knob

or the steering wheel

then take three deep breaths

Mindful breaths, cleansing breaths

And sometimes its in a little Sabbath moments

That I am brought back to the here and now

the present moment

where Christ is already with us.

I'm sure you can think of other ways to wait upon the LORD

And I'd love to hear about them
But whatever it is
When you do wait for the LORD
Do it with anticipation and expectation
because all through the Bible
whenever God's people wait for the LORD
something powerful happens
not always dramatic
but powerful nonetheless.
The prophet Isaiah said
Those who wait for the LORD
Shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with wings as Eagles
They shall run and not grow weary
They shall walk and not faint.
Psalm 130 counsels waiting too
For its in waiting for God
that the Psalmist discovers
that God has forgiven his sins,
Indeed in the waiting
the psalmist discovers God has forgiven all Israel's sins.
Fear is also an epidemic in our world
But listen to what happens in the waiting.
"Be strong and let your heart ake courage
all you who wait for the LORD."

Fear simply cannot survive
in the presence of God
a God who loves to be found in the waiting.

And to those who work too hard
Listen to this from the scriptures
Again from the Psalms
“It is but lost labor
that we haste to rise up early
And so late take our rest
And eat the bread of anxiety

For those beloved of God
Are given gifts
given blessings
even while they sleep.

Now admittedly, sometimes waiting upon God takes a long, long time
And sometimes it is hard to wait upon God
in an age of instant gratification.

But when we are tempted to become impatient with God
It will do us good to remember our ancestors in the faith
who waited for so long.

Remember Moses after killing an Egyptian
waited 40 years in the desert tending sheep and goats
before he was ready to be called by God.

Remember Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for a child
Jesus himself waited 30 years for his baptism,

and the beginning of his ministry.

I do not claim to understand why we must sometimes wait

I do know that often

my own initial impulse on things is wrong;

it takes waiting for discernment

and sometimes my desires need purifying.

or my thinking needs the clarity

that comes through waiting.

But sometimes the ways of God

are simply a mystery

Nevertheless in waiting something powerful happens

when we pause and wait for God.

For it seems to be in the waiting itself

that human beings discover over and over again

that God is faithful

Faithful to us

And faithful to this world

which God is still making.

One more story

And this one also about a dog.

Years ago when both of my uncles were still alive

two of them tried to teach me how hunt.

One of their favorite things to do was quail hunting

over near Sheridan in Grant County.

I enjoyed it, but in spite of all their efforts

I never did learn to shoot straight enough to get a quail
But looking back they gave me something even better

And that was the experience
of watching a good dog work.

Uncle Don had some fine bird dogs

They really were a marvel

For whenever they came upon a covey of quail

It was thing to behold.

A thing of beauty.

For in that moment

The dog would pause, freeze

stay perfectly still

And so would we

in anticipation

of what was about to come.

That's what is Advent is about

the power of the pause,

Waiting upon the LORD.