

**Sunday, December 2, 2012**  
**Rev. Diane Monti-Catania**

**Sermon – “Waiting Patiently”**

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*For you I wait all day long* says the psalmist;

Jeremiah reports, *the days are surely coming says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made;*

Jesus promises his disciples *Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

How about you?

What do you wait for?

I often have conversations with people when they tell me that they have plans to do something, as soon as something else happens.

They will start school as soon as things calm down at work;

they will get married as soon as they have enough money;

they will buy new clothes as soon as they lose weight;

they will volunteer more time when the children get older;

they will travel and see the world as soon as they retire.

So much of our lives are spent waiting.

We wait for affirmation, recognition, fulfillment, love, joy....

everything it seems it always just around the corner, just out of reach, almost....almost.

Our scripture readings today tell us that our sense of waiting ought to be focused on God – specifically on the second coming of the Son of God.

We are told to ‘be alert at all times praying that we will have the strength to endure all things and stand before the Son of God.’”

I like this idea of being alert – it feels active –like something that we can do.

I like the idea that Jesus could just drop into our lives at any second with no notice and ask “what are you doing?”

For some people that type of waiting would produce anxiety – never knowing what might happen.

For others, it creates excitement.

Our biblical ancestors spent much of their lives waiting:

waiting for Israel to be redeemed- for the 'shoot of Jesse' to be revealed.

And at one point in time, Jesus came and their promise was fulfilled.

The disciples actually got to live out part of that promise in spending a brief time with Jesus, but then they and the early church spent the rest of their lives waiting – waiting for Jesus to fulfill his promise and return.

We have now joined those ancestors in the waiting.

We too wait for Jesus.

Two thousand years of waiting have helped us to learn patience. We have evolved into a people comfortable with a promise. Henri Nouwen says

“Waiting patiently is not like waiting for the bus to come, the rain to stop, or the sun to rise. It is an active waiting in which we live the present moment to the full in order to find there the signs of the One we are waiting for.”

So as we wait our alertness is focused on all of the reminders in our lives of God's enduring presence.

While we wait to stand before the Son of Man, we recognize his attributes in our neighbor.

Until the Lord joins us at the table, we share communion in remembrance.

We live our lives in such a way that if Jesus did appear and say “What are you doing?” we would be able to respond, “I am doing your work and waiting for you.”

I had a friend once who prayed each night for the wellbeing of her children's future partners.

I thought this was somewhat unusual in that our children were only in grammar school.

She explained, however, that the person who would someday be her child's spouse was likely alive and living in some part of the world, struggling with everyday challenges and being shaped into the adult they might one day become.

She wanted to offer her prayers of support and love so that unknown person would grow to adulthood knowing God's grace.

We too, can pray that we might grow to be a person who can stand among the righteous before God.

But there is a caution.

We must not focus solely on the future, at the expense of living our lives in the present.

The future is of course unknown.

We can prepare for it – but we cannot control it.

We must learn to embrace the journey – not dwelling in the past – nor fearing the future-but paying attention to what is happening right before our eyes and seeing there the first rays of God's glorious coming.

The word patience comes from the Latin verb *patior* which means "to suffer."

Again, Nouwen says that “Waiting patiently is suffering through the present moment, tasting it to the full, and letting the seeds that are sown in the ground on which we stand grow into strong plants.”

*Advent* means arrival – the culmination of anticipation.

We are waiting, together, for a miracle.

Today we welcomed new members into the life of our church.

We made promises to one another to stand watch together, to help, to support, to wait.

In a few moments we will feast together at the communion table – a reminder that at one moment in time Jesus Christ was here, on this earth, a man, walking among us.

Our faith is not imaginary.

Our Christian story is one of hope and promise.

We know that God’s faithful promises are fulfilled because Jesus was here.

We must be cautious this Advent season to avoid the trap of familiarity.

We must not let the Christmas story become routine.

We celebrate this wondrous season each year to remind us that we follow a God who was made known to us in the miracle of Jesus Christ.

We retell the story and celebrate with gifts and parties to glorify a creator who loved us so much that he took the form of a man and came among us.

Jesus Christ was killed by an empire that is long gone.

What remains, thousands of years later is the teachings of a humble carpenter who lived simply, pointed to God, reached out to strangers, forgave his enemies and demonstrated to us that we have the power to create the kingdom of God – the eternal reign – right here.

Let us go into the Advent season with our hearts open to God's holy spirit.

Make a commitment to rise above the noise of the 'holiday season.'

Rise above to a place of wonder, of reverence, of humility and awe.

Advent is a time of opportunity; a time when you can practice patience while waiting to feel the divine spark in your own being.

Look for signs of God's grace in each day. Note them.

Remind yourself over and over that we are waiting, together, for a miracle. Waiting with certainty. Waiting with hope. Waiting with patience. Waiting for God.