

Waiting and Waiting!

Advent Sunday
30 November 2008

Church of the Ascension, Hilton
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[Notes: More filled out in the sermon delivery than recorded here]

Waiting...

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It is one of the hardest things to do! Yet it is integral to life.

When the August winds have come and gone and it has turned hot, dry and dusty, we wait for the spring rains. We know they will come – early, late, too much or too little – but they will come.

We wait for good things – a pregnancy / a child to grow up and begin school / a graduation...

We wait anxiously or painfully – to go into surgery, to recover when ill, or waiting and watching someone die

We wait impatiently – for technology to respond more quickly in our fast-paced world, or a child for whom counting the sleeps until a holiday starts of Christmas comes seems “forever”. Or in a doctor’s “waiting room” – like the time my wife Julia was kept waiting nearly 2 hours for a specialist referral, and no apology for the delay was made, so she cheekily sent his office an invoice for 2 hours of her time! [No, it wasn’t paid]

Waiting is integral to life.

**In Advent, we are especially aware that we are waiting for God.**

Preparation for the celebration of Christmas

Several themes to Advent

Waiting for the promised redemption

Reference to Advent Wreath – circle of wire representing cycle of years in which the world waited for a Saviour, and also the cycle of years since that fulfilment in which the world waits for further fulfilment, for Christ to come again, and for God’s fullness of redemption to be revealed.

Last few weeks' sermons and readings: Focus on "expectation of calamities", signs and troubles – including warnings by the prophets, warnings of Jesus himself. Jesus warned that we would NOT know the exact day and time (as per today's Gospel reading, Mark 13: 32-37) but are to be ready.

[Sermon of 09 Nov 2008 – "Hope Springs Eternal – A Surge of Hope"]

[Relevant words from Revelation to John, indicating that eventually, all forces opposed to God will be defeated, brought under the sovereignty of God, with no more power to hurt, inflict pain or evil...]

Waiting for God's Kingdom in all its fullness – not partial. Shalom. Justice. All wrongs made right.

### **Comments from today's readings:**

#### **Isaiah 63:16 – 64:8**

"Tear open the heavens and come down"

"Nations tremble"

"We have become like one who is unclean"

"YET you are our father..."

#### **Psalms 80: 1-7**

"Restore us so that we may be saved..."

#### **1 Corinthians 1: 3-9**

We wait for the Lord / the Day of the Lord (as per previous weeks' readings)

#### **Mark 13: 32-37**

### **Waiting is redeemed... by hope**

Waiting for its own sake may be frustrating, meaningless, painful, annoying and / or irritating. BUT: It is redeemed by Hope [cf. sermon 3 weeks ago – 09 Nov 2008].

Advent is a Season of Hope

Hope in what is still to come

A well-founded hope...

Founded upon the promises of a Saviour being fulfilled [Ref Isaiah 9 – unto us a child is born, a son is given, and his name shall be called...]

Gives confidence that further promises will yet be fulfilled, in a way and time that we do not now know. When the prophets spoke, they did so unknowing of the exact details of Jesus' birth. But now we know, and affirm:

Christ HAS come, Christ IS risen, Christ WILL come again"

That alone is our confidence, our reason for hope, and our assurance. It is a firm hope, not in the sense of "I hope it won't rain tomorrow" or "Lets hope for a cooler day tomorrow", but in the sense of assurance of something yet to be experienced or fulfilled.

That is what infuses the continued waiting with meaning, and makes the waiting bearable – whether at times the waiting is patient or impatient, frustrating or not, waiting with ease or waiting in pain.

Prayer:

Hope in waiting

Patience, trust, faithfulness, because You, Lord, are faithful

**Close with the Advent Collect (said together):**

Almighty Father

Your Son came to us in humility as our Saviour

And at the last day he will come again in glory as our judge:

Give us grace to turn away from darkness to the light of Christ

That we may be ready to welcome him and to enter into his kingdom,

Where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit

One God, for ever and ever

Amen