

First Sunday in Advent  
Sermon Text: Mark 13:24-37  
Related Text: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
Isaiah 64:1-9  
Date Preached: November 30, 2008

You place a phone call. You hear a recording. It sounds something like this: Thank you for calling Bob's. If you would like to know the balance of your account, please press one. If you would like to add services, please press two. To make a payment on your account, please press three. To cancel service, please press four. For all other inquires, please stay on the line and the next available representative will be with you shortly.

Approximately twenty seconds later you hear this: Thank you for waiting. We know your time is important. Please stay on the line for the next available representative.

In the instant gratification world, one of the things we have lost is the ability to wait. We figure if we have to wait for something, then there is a problem.

Waiting can and often does make us nervous. We are nervous about waiting for loved ones to get home because they are late, and perhaps there was an accident or the weather is bad.

We are nervous about waiting for a diagnosis about our medical tests. Waiting can invite warranted and unwarranted speculation.

I remember nine years ago when speculation was rampant about widespread computer failure, forecasts that the end of the world is coming at the turn of the millennium, and people hoarding non-perishable food.

Waiting can be exciting. One simply needs to ask the fifteen year old how long before they are able to apply for their learners permit. Seniors often can tell you how many days are left until graduation. Anticipation builds for the engaged couple as their wedding date approaches.

Waiting can be extremely awkward. Those waiting on the transplant lists of various hospitals and networks are in the awkward position of waiting for someone to die, that they might live as a result.

Nervous, fearful, loneliness, anticipation, frustration, despair, helplessness are but a few of the feelings associated with the Advent seasons of our lives.

Yet, there is one quality about waiting that keeps us from total resignation. HOPE.

The hope is not in our ability to make our situation better. The hope is not in our dependence upon other people, for even our best well intentioned well meaning friends can slip up and let us down. The hope is in the one who has the ability to deliver on every promise he has made.

Our hope is in Christ Jesus. The scriptures, the Word of God points us to the one who is able to set us free from our dilemmas and liberate us from our wait. The prophet Isaiah points to a time of deliverance for God's people. Jesus himself points to what is about to take place in his life, by pointing to the events of his death and resurrection.

We will see the Son of Man coming. He will gather his chosen people. Keep alert; the time will come for his return.

Our hope is in Christ who keeps his promise. That doesn't mean everything will go well in our waiting.

Clearly as a nation we are in anxious times as foreclosures and unemployment rates rise. As a world we are in anxious times as manmade and natural disasters escalate.

In the times of the early church there were similar fears. They feared things such as the economy, infringements upon their faith, changes that occurred outside of their control, sickness and isolation. Paul's words in such times rang true then and are also helpful for us.

In the fifth chapter of Romans, the apostle writes, "...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

God's love is present in our waiting. When all else in our lives is filled with confusion and in the midst of all our questions and doubts, God's love is present. God's love is a love that is with us now; it is a gift we don't have to wait to receive for it is already ours.

The gift of God's love became ours when Jesus suffered and died on the cross. God's love abounded for us in Jesus resurrection. God's love sustains us in every advent of our lives.

Again, as we heard from the Apostle Paul this time from First Corinthians, "...for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of

every kind--just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every spiritual gift we need to sustain us in our advent waiting is ours as a community of faith. It is in the community of faith that we are encouraged in our wait, with reminders of his love in Word and in the body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for you.

Waiting is hard, but we do not wait alone. We wait with the sustaining love of Christ that is a gift for each of us. AMEN.