

Devotions – November 28 – December 4, 2021

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Sunday, November 28, 2021

Text: Psalm 25:5

Lead me in your truth, and teach me for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Today is the first Sunday in Advent. In Latin, the word “advent” means “coming.” You probably already know that. I’m sure you also know what’s coming -- Christmas! But we must wait for it!

When you were a kid, didn’t you find the waiting torturous? Besides your birthday, Christmas was the most exciting time of the year. I would flip through the Sears Wish Book and draw big circles around the gifts that I was certain would make my Christmas merry. But I had to wait. We always had an Advent calendar at my house so each day I opened another window, knowing that each opened window brought me closer to the end of my wait.

I was raised in a good Lutheran family, so I had learned that the reason we give gifts at Christmas was because the wisemen brought gifts to the baby Jesus. And I was told that the gift that God gave us was the best gift of all. But the excitement about Christmas from my selfish, childish perspective was about my wish book gifts! That’s what I was really waiting for.

Today, I don’t wait for tangible gifts. But I still wait. Let’s wait together this week.

Prayer: *God of waiting, lead me in your truth for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.*



Monday, November 29, 2021

Text: Psalm 27:13-14

Look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage.

What are you waiting for? The water to boil? The weekend? Your turn in the check-out line? The results from your cancer screening? The ability to walk easily after a knee replacement? The pandemic to be over?

We all wait for something. Waiting is part of every-day life. Some waits are painless, expected, and simply annoying. Others are painful, require discipline and affect every aspect of our lives.

A book club friend of mine recently had a stroke. She is only 60 so the news was shocking to hear. She spent a month in Green Bay in rehab and another month in a county medical care facility. She was anxious to return to her little house in the woods where good neighbors had been caring for her dog and cat. After evaluating her situation and equipping her with a wheelchair and walker, a doctor allowed her to be discharged. She was excited that the wait to return home was over. She arrived on a Friday. On Saturday, her neighbors found her lying on the floor beside her wheelchair, unable to help herself. An ambulance carried her back to the facility. The wait is not over for my friend.

Prayer: God of healing and waiting, we pray for those who are waiting for healing. Grant them strength and courage to face their challenges hour by hour, day by day.



Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Text: Psalm 37: 7

Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently...

That's a tough assignment! It's difficult to wait **patiently** in a microwave society! We expect instant gratification! We buy products that can meet our needs with little or no waiting: instant potatoes, instant pudding, Quick Oats, Minute Rice, Stove-top Stuffing, fast-drying glue, rapid wrinkle remover, fast-acting antacids. The list is endless. We even want our money matters to be handled with speed: online banking, fast cash and instant loans. Many play the lottery hoping to win big and some fall for get-rich-quick schemes.

I appreciate time-saving products that get me out of the kitchen quicker - and I certainly don't want to give up my microwave! But what are we doing with the extra time we're saving?

The psalmist tells us to “Be still before the Lord.”

I’ve been taking an exercise class that features elements of Tai Chi, “an internal Chinese martial art practiced for its health benefits.” I’m not nearly as graceful as my instructor, but the slow, smooth movements and deep abdominal breathing bring an hour of stillness to my week. If I were more disciplined, I could bring a few minutes of stillness to each day. (I’ll work on it!) It’s sort of an adult time out.

But wait! I’m preaching to the choir! If you are reading this, you are already taking a moment to be still. Those of us who are retired really don’t have an excuse, do we? We have the time to be still.

Prayer: *God of stillness, remind us to take time to be still before you.*



Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Text: Psalm 130:5-6

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

Some things are definitely worth the wait! Homemade soup, fresh bread from the oven, a baby’s first step, a cancer-free test result after months of chemo... And when the wait is over, we must celebrate, savor, and remember how we felt.

I have a hibiscus plant that tests my ability to wait. It gets buried every winter under at least two feet of snow so new shoots aren’t very anxious to start their journey upward. One spring I assumed the winter had done it in, so I started digging to replace it with something living. To my surprise, I unearthed several green shoots just below the surface, waiting to break through. Hope was restored, but the wait continued. Throughout the summer, the leaves slowly emerged and tiny buds slowly formed. Those buds kept the developing flower petals encased for weeks, kind of like a cocoon. Every day I checked to see if the largest bud was ready to burst into bloom. Finally, one day in late August, it did! The huge red bloom was worth the wait!

We don’t always recognize how God is coming to us in our daily lives. Look, hope, and wait. New life will “adventually” appear.

Prayer: *God of hibiscus blooms, we give thanks for the everyday goodness that waiting every day brings.*



Thursday, December 2, 2021

Text: Isaiah 40:31

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Waiting may be challenging and frustrating, but it can lead to something positive, and enduring. Waiting can be a period of incubation - a time for hatching new ideas, thoughts, and visions.

Today would have been my late husband's 80th birthday. He died too young, but he lived with gusto! His mind was filled with ideas for making his corner of the world better than he found it. Two of his passions were Fortune Lake Camp and the community of Crystal Falls. For Fortune Lake, he had visions of relocating and renovating old Conservation Corps cabins and building retreat duplexes for youth and a high comfort facility for adults. For the community, he set about saving a historic house as a museum, creating a contemporary center, and restoring a vacant theatre.

But waiting wasn't his forte! In his mind's eye, he could envision what many others could not. He was often told to wait! Eventually, others caught the vision, and the waiting turned into action. Some of his dreams were realized in his lifetime but it's taken years for others to come to fruition.

Prayer: *God of waiting and action, encourage and renew the strength of those who have ideas and passions to make the world a better place. Help us all find a balance between waiting and action.*



Friday, December 3, 2021

Text: Isaiah 30: 18

The Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show mercy to

you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

Waiting is actually a luxury and most of us Americans enjoy that luxury. If the roast isn't done and dinner is late, we can wait. If we're stuck behind a loaded logging truck, we might be late to our destination, but we can wait. If our team doesn't have a successful season, we may be disappointed, but we can hold out for next year.

Some people CAN'T WAIT - without suffering serious consequences. If a single parent loses her job, her children can't wait to eat until she finds a new one. If someone is pinned in their vehicle due to a rollover accident, the victim may die waiting to be rescued. If a child is choking, his airway must be opened immediately! Thankfully, EMTs, firefighters, and other trained professionals rush to save people in life-threatening situations.

Some people SHOULD NOT HAVE TO WAIT any longer! Refugees fleeing from hostile governments, prisoners who were wrongly convicted, starving or malnourished people, victims of domestic abuse, families living in substandard housing, people who are judged by their color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, or religion. These are the oppressed "waiters," who are waiting for justice. They are waiting for the God of justice. Isaiah says, "the Lord waits to be gracious and to show mercy."

It's God's work - our hands. We can shorten the wait for these waiters with our gifts of money through the ELCA and other charitable programs. We can advocate for those in need through political avenues, our attitudes, and our conversations.

Prayer: Lord of life, you are waiting to show mercy for all - especially those who are waiting for rescue and relief. Prod us who are privileged into action for those who wait in need.



Saturday, December 4, 2021

Text: Isaiah 25:9

It will be said on that day, lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

We have waited through the first week of Advent and the waiting will continue as we prepare to celebrate the physical entrance of God into God's creation - the birth of Jesus. We understand better now what waiting means. The pandemic has taught us. Last

Advent we were preparing for a Covid Christmas. Worship may have been virtual or maybe in our cars tuned into a transmitted broadcast. We have waited for our traditional Christmas celebration. It will indeed be a wonderful day!

I'm looking forward to another wonderful day planned for eight months from now. Fortune Lake Camp will celebrate 92 years of ministry with an original musical called "One Wonderful Day." The title refers to a song that is sometimes sung at camp. Here's how it begins: "Wouldn't it simply be super if, for one wonderful day, no one on earth were complaining and none would insist upon his or her way? Wouldn't it really be something if no one would argue or fight? Think of how happy and peaceful we'd all be from morning 'til night."

Our families, our congregations, our communities, our country and our world are far from experiencing such a wonderful day. "It will be said on that day, lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us." God will save us - ADVENTually!

Prayer: *God of Advent, you are the one for whom we are waiting. Come, Lord Jesus.*

