

Well Worth the Wait

November 29, 2020, First Sunday of Advent

Gospel of Mark 13:33-37

Fr. Brad

As we begin the season of Advent and as we take a moment to ponder the readings of this weekend, there are two themes that dominate - - keeping **awake** and **waiting**.

As a kid...I often lamented, 'why do we have to wait.' It took sooo long for Christmas to get here...same with summer holidays.

For the past several weeks the readings, including the Gospel, have alluded to the end times. These end times have implications both in the light of our own death and the *parousia* and final judgement.

In both contexts, we are called to be **patient**, but also be **ready**.

As human persons, we know ourselves - - in infancy we demanded our every wish be granted right now. As we matured, however, we started to discover that our humanity is too deep to be instantly filled up. And the more honest we are with ourselves, the more we come to realize the utter inadequacy of this world and of our own efforts to fulfill ourselves. As we mature we come to learn the things of the world do not satisfy our deepest longing for God.

But maturing is a process it is still hard for us to admit our utter need for God's presence in our lives - - because there is still that part of us called pride and ego that don't necessarily want God's input or advice. We are blind or asleep to the reality that God's presence is with us and all around us all the time.

There is much resistance in the world to this and if we are honest with ourselves, there is resistance within each one of us at some level.

Our first reading from Isaiah acknowledges this reality - - we are sinful, weak, and unable to grow in holiness by our own power. We wander off on our own way. In our fallen nature we are ill-equipped to get it right -- which is true, we can't do it ourselves, we can't re-soften our hearts, we need God to help us with His grace.

Isaiah confesses this inadequacy within the hearts of Israel and within the hearts of each one of us, recognizing that we 'wander' from God's ways and our hearts become hardened so that we don't fear God.

In this reading as well, there is a tone of blaming God for not acting here. 'Why do you let us wander....' Isaiah says, "Why do you, God, let this happen?"

Whether we want to call it our fallen nature, our sinfulness, our inadequacy, our complacency, etc. we don't measure up and we know it. And sometimes we question whether we even want it. We are easily desensitized, distracted, and complacent. How can we be so hard of heart?

Here is one possibility. Pay attention to the reality of our ongoing desire for a quick fix, for our tendency to avoid difficult issues or subjects or people because it is not only inconvenient but darn right painful.

We don't like to wait for an answer, and if we have to wait too long, we make up our own answer - - or we just avoid dealing with the question. Our lack of desire to wait for an answer shows that we are all too willing to compromise in order to satisfy our appetites.

This is where the value and virtue of waiting comes in. It is at least in part, the lack of a 'spirituality of waiting' that has the effect of de-sensitizing us.

Think about it.... the more instantly gratified we are, the more we come to expect that to be the norm.

We start to settle for less than God desires for us. We are lulled to sleep. And we lose touch with our need for God, our own sinfulness and our desperate need for God's Love and mercy.

And in order to honestly plea for mercy, we honestly need to know - - that we need it.

How in touch are we with our inadequacies, our own sins, our failures, and our own vulnerability? We impulsively complain, accuse, project, evade, we distract ourselves. We sidestep our own need for self examination. We are not as adept at confession as we could be.

We need to **wake up to our need for God** and wake up to the reality of God among us, with us, and within us.

Advent gives us an opportunity to focus on our need for God and our inadequacy without God.

It is a time to recognize and admit our reticence to fully allow God into our world and into our own being and the need to concentrate on getting our own houses in order.

Waiting is hard, but waiting means we have time to prepare, to actively work at preparing a place for the full meal deal.....ultimately God reigning in our hearts.

There is truth in the adage, 'Good things come to those who wait.'

As a kid, when Christmas finally came, I was so happy and grateful. It meant spending time relaxing with immediate family, relatives, and friends, gift sharing and experiencing the whole atmosphere of peace and good cheer. All was right with the world.

This year, mindful of this pandemic, waiting has much added meaning as we wait patiently for the time when we can physically gather with family and friends in a safe way.

And by the way, summertime to me was magical particularly when you have to wait through 6 months of winter. But it is well worth the wait. And in the big picture, when God Himself comes....WOW.

May the Eucharist we celebrate grant us the grace of patient waiting and an alertness to the ways in which we can prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord. Amen.