

Waiting isn't very popular these days. We live in a time when "instant answers" are only a few keystrokes away on a tiny computer that's carried around in our pocket, and instant gratification can be purchased online and delivered to our home that very day. As people many of us have grown used to not having to wait for much. So when we toss a little "fear" into the waiting equation, waiting transforms from unpopular to almost unbearable.

And yet, the season of Advent is a time of waiting. I might even call it "holy waiting." As people of faith, we aren't just "awaiting" the arrival of Jesus in the manger on Christmas morning, but we're also "waiting" for his "return" at the end of time when God will reconcile all things to Himself. Both involve waiting. But one, as Luke tells us from his Gospel above, includes fear.

I used to wonder why, during this season of Advent and this time of waiting, we heard stories about the "end" and not just stories of Jesus' birth. But with age, life experiences, and many years of "waiting" I've come to better understand the connection. You see, in the birth of Jesus those many years ago, our "waiting" for the long-awaited Messiah ended. God in flesh, Emmanuel, became one of us in order to redeem us. But in God's great plan and vision, God also gave us time in order that "ALL might come to know him." Everything is headed toward the fulfillment of time on that day. And as we're told in the above passage, there are signs everywhere that it's approaching. The day's approach is as natural and obvious as the signs of Summer with the sprouting of fig leaves on a tree. It's coming, and so we wait.

But during this time in-between, in which everyone and everything waits, as people of faith we're offered instructions as to "how" our waiting might look in order that we might not be overcome with fear. "Do not fear" we're told over and over again throughout Scripture. We're encouraged to "*stand up and raise our heads, because our [final] redemption is drawing near.*" We're told to not be shocked or surprised or "fear" the signs all around us, but to understand and see them as the reign of God taking place and the promise of that future day. We're encouraged to stay connected and alert to God through our prayers. So you see, it's more than just simply waiting ... it's "holy waiting." It's in this waiting that we reflect our love for God and for our neighbors. It's in this waiting that we share God's love for this world and all people with anyone that will listen. And it's in this waiting that we celebrate that because Christ lives, so can (now) and will (future) we live. It's waiting with a purpose.

My prayer for each of us, during this special season of Advent, is that we practice "holy waiting."

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!  
Pastor Steve Mahaffey