

Wait with Hope

1st Advent Sermon - November 27, 2022

Scriptures: Psalm 122:1-9 and Luke 7:18-23

Golden Verse: *“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”* Luke 7:19

Advent, the happy, mysterious time of waiting for the coming of Jesus, arrived quietly and unnoticed.

When I was a small child in Europe, the angel brought the Christmas tree and the gifts on Christmas Eve. Perhaps the happiest time in my childhood was that hour when I was trembling with excitement, waiting for the arrival of the Christmas angel with the Christmas tree. In my soul, I had an indescribable mysterious anticipation and hope to see the angel coming from heaven to my house. I did not know what I could expect but, I knew that soon, some great joy was coming this way. When the door finally opened in front of me, probably it was almost impossible to tell which shone more: the lights on the Christmas tree or my joyfully laughing child’s eyes.

Happy are those adults who can live the mysterious time of waiting for Advent with such a childlike spirit of enthusiastic and happy excitement.

Let’s remember how happy we are, weeks in advance, waiting for someone who will come home from far away.

The happiness of Christmas depends to a large extent on how the Advent waiting and preparation is. Often, I hear that the people were eagerly waiting for Christmas, but the joy was so quickly gone afterwards. The reason why Christmas is joylessly disappearing from our souls is that we do not prepare enough for it.

For this, let us prepare ourselves during the next four weeks for Christmas, and let us fill our souls with HOPE, PEACE JOY and LOVE. During these Advent Sundays, let us learn what we should do, and how we should wait for Him. Also, let us learn how we should prepare our hearts for His second coming in order to walk with Him into His eternal kingdom.

John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin, the great Advent prophet, is a connecting bridge between the Old and New Testaments. His giant figure rises in front of us today from the story we read. He was the one who shared the gospel about the upcoming Messiah, who is the Lamb of God, who will baptize us with *“the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the*

wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16b-17) He was preaching about the Messiah who will show love and grace but, at the same time, He will judge the sinners and will clean up this world from sin. John the Baptist was so brave as a prophet that he was not afraid to preach to King Herod, condemning the king for his sinful life. For this, John the Baptist ended up jailed.

At the same time, the Lord Jesus started His mission. The news about His wonderful actions were reported to John the Baptist, who every day was waiting for his execution. John happily listened to everything he heard about Jesus.

He had two special messianic expectations from Jesus. First, John expected a merciful messiah, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. On the other hand, the King who holds eternal judgment, will turn against His enemies, will go directly against sin and sinners. But because John heard only positive actions of Jesus, about the humble, loving and caring Jesus, then John started to doubt if Jesus would be the Messiah.

For this, he sent a message to Jesus: *“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”* Luke 7:19

When Jesus heard the doubting question of John, He did not send to John a long theological answer but responded in a very simple way. *“So He replied to the messengers, ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of Me.’”* Luke 7: 22-23

On the first Christmas, the Lord Jesus did not come into this world to defeat God’s enemies but to show God’s love. Defeating sin and judging the living and the spiritually dead will be part of His second coming, after this earth will come to an end. Today, He is quietly inviting us to be part of His kingdom.

Jesus came first to heal the blind, and to help you and me to look into our own souls and to see what kind of changes we have to make in our own lives. He came to open our eyes, to see that He took our sin on His cross, where He died for us as our Saviour. He came to open our eyes to see beyond the grave and to see the everlasting, glorious heavenly kingdom, which is prepared for us. He came to give us strength to walk properly during our spiritual journey, not to stumble, not to sit paralyzed, but to walk on the narrow road.

He came to heal us from spiritual deafness, to hear His calling voice. He is here to resurrect the spiritually dead people and to bring them closer to God's grace. The work of Jesus today consists of preaching the gospel to the poor, to you and to me, so we all find our peace and our comfort in Him.

Dear beloved, I feel very sad when I see that, very often, those people whom we love the most, who are so dear to us, with whom we would love to be together in heaven, don't want to be in a closer relationship with God, and they don't really care about our faith. They are not allowing Christ Jesus to touch their eyes or their ears and, for this, they cannot receive the necessary spiritual strength from Jesus. What I noticed is the biggest problem is that they do not hear from us the changes Jesus did in us. And this is because probably Jesus was NOT able to make any changes in us so far, although we are listening to Him for decades, OR we don't know how to share with them our experiences about Jesus, faith and God's love.

We have to change our approach towards our loved ones. Gently, we have to include into our sentences the joy we have in the Lord. As often as we can, we have to include in our talk how thankful we are to the Lord for everything we receive from Him, day by day. We have to share with them that once we lived like them. We were running after our business, after our money, after earthly goods but, at one point, Jesus opened our eyes to see the more important things, He opened our ears to hear His voice, and He straightened our feet and our lives to search and follow eternal, everlasting goods. Around us, there are so many blind, deaf and spiritually damaged people. They have to hear from us that there is a solution; there is more than what we see.

There is HOPE in this hopeless world. This society is longing for LOVE, PEACE and JOY. We have to tell them that they can search and find their hearts' desire with HOPE, because Jesus is coming to them to fulfill their hearts' desire.

What they want can happen because we are in Advent, waiting for Jesus with HOPE. We can HOPE with confidence, because Jesus is coming to open our eyes and our ears, and their expectations can be fulfilled. We have to believe in the new possibilities He is bringing to us. We can expect a better future with hope because Jesus is the cause of HOPE.

Hope is courageous. Advent is the time. *“While we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.”* Titus 2:13-14

The true HOPE has a purifying effect: *“All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.”* 1 John 3:3

The Apostle Paul wrote: *“And again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* Romans 15:12-13

Let us declare and share with our loved ones the wonderful work Jesus Christ already did in our lives with the HOPE that Jesus will come to them at this Christmas and will touch their eyes, their ears, and their hearts. Amen