

Wait



Discerning God's *kairos* in the midst of our daily *chronos*

ADVENT DEVOTIONS – WEEK 2
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by Jill Duffield,
Presbyterian Outlook editor

SUNDAY | PSALM 62

Wait. Wait in silence. Wait patiently. Wait in hope. Rarely, if ever, do we want the answer to be “wait.” Rarely do we wait without engaging in distractions to help the time pass. We stand in line and immediately, most of us look to our cell phones to read the headlines or check our email or play a game. We multitask. We toggle from one website to another. Waiting makes us anxious. Seeing buffering on the livestream causes irritation. An image of someone frozen on Zoom annoys us. Technology trains us to expect everything to happen instantly, seamlessly, until it doesn't and then we get unduly angry. I always knew in my household the moment the internet went down because my teenage children would emerge from their room like whack-a-moles in an arcade game.

What is it about waiting that is so difficult for us? Did generations before us tolerate waiting better or is our impatience just more evident these days?

Of course, there are seasons of waiting that warrant our fear and unease. Waiting for a medical test result. Waiting for a loved one to come out of surgery. Waiting for a job offer to come when we are desperate for employment. Waiting for a family member to return safely from military deployment. Waiting for a storm to pass. We know this kind of anxious waiting, too.

But what are we waiting for this Advent and how do our Advent hopes meet our current fears and real worries? The psalmist writes: “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from the Lord comes my salvation. God alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.” This liturgical season is a pregnant kind of waiting — marked by expectation of new birth and new life that brings change, a transition that alters our priorities and schedules and reveals that some of what we have previously valued does not really matter anymore. We are waiting for God, not in vain, but in certain hope that with the birth of Jesus salvation for all creation comes and reorders our world and our lives. However, we may need to wait in silence in order to quiet our minds, discern God's near presence, and trust that God is with us in all of our waiting, all of our worrying, all of our distractions, anxieties and fears.

Lord, you are our rock and our salvation, our refuge and strength, our hope and breath. As we wait with anticipation and anxiety, with patience and with eagerness, even with irritation and fear, silence in us any voice but yours. Grant us confidence in your promises to never abandon us and certainty in your power to bring light and life, love and grace, to all places and all people. Amen.

MONDAY | LUKE 2:22-26

Simeon represents those stalwart, faithful people who show up and serve week after week. Can you think of someone who fits this description? The dutifulness of these folks keep the congregation going through good times and challenging ones. They serve out of loyalty to God, not for accolades or attention. Today remember and give thanks for the Simeons whose waiting to see God is marked by consistent presence and service.

Lord, we give you thanks and praise this day for your faithful servants, those whose loyalty to you is visible in their service to Christ's church and your beloved world. Sure of your Word, they keep theirs and show up daily, expecting to meet you face to face. Help us to do likewise, not only with a sense of duty, but with an anticipatory joy. Amen.

TUESDAY | PSALM 33:20-22

Our soul waits for the Lord. God is our help and our shield. We wait not for some unknown future or presence. We wait for the Lord. When have you waited specifically for someone or something? This sort of directed waiting shapes our hopes, expectations and behavior as we wait. If we are indeed waiting for our loving, saving Lord this Advent, what attitudes and actions will characterize our waiting? Today, notice the tenor and content of your waiting.

God you are our help and our shield. We wait knowing that our waiting will not last forever and that you will surely come with good news of great joy for all people. We wait with a hope that motivates us to sing your praise and tend your sheep. Our hearts are glad as we anticipate and experience now your steadfast love that endures forever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY | ISAIAH 8:16-17

Isaiah says to bind up the testimony and seal the teachings. God's people are believing conspiracies and fearing things other than the Lord. God says to the prophet to only fear and honor the Lord. Isaiah affirms that he will wait and hope for the Lord who seems to be hiding for a season. When you feel God is absent, how do you wait in hope for the Lord? Today, what is a source of hope in difficult waiting?

God of all times and places, when we feel as if you are hiding your face from us, our hope dims and our waiting seems endless. We give in to false teachings and let our fears run rampant. Send your Spirit to grant us hope even as we wait through difficult and painful seasons. Shine your light in the darkness, even if only for a moment, so that we remember your promise that joy comes in the morning. Amen.

THURSDAY | JUDE 17-22

Whenever there is a "but" in Scripture, pay special attention. The "but" represents a pivot that points to how disciples of Jesus Christ are to behave in the midst of challenging times. Here we read that Christians are to keep ourselves in the love of God as we wait for our Lord's mercy. What might it look like to keep ourselves in God's love today? This week? This month?

God of grace, while the headlines tell of turmoil and acrimony, we who follow Jesus Christ are told by your living word to keep ourselves in your love, to wait for our Lord's mercy and to be merciful to others. We know that your love is not theoretical but embodied and tangible. The mercy of Jesus Christ saves and transforms, perhaps especially during times of trial and pain. Make us instruments of this love and mercy, even now, especially now. Amen.

FRIDAY | LUKE 2:36-38

What do we do when we are waiting for something promised by God, but not yet visible or evident? Perhaps we are waiting for healing in a broken relationship or waiting to be able to forgive or be forgiven? Today we are told of Anna who waits for the redemption of Jerusalem and while she waits, she worships, fasts and prays. Is there a spiritual practice you might try that could keep you connected to God as you wait?

Lord, we want to see your promises come to fruition: promises of peace, justice and redemption. We do not want to grow weary or cynical, hopeless or defeated. We long for our priorities to reflect your character and our faith, even when we cannot yet see that for which we yearn. Ground us in prayer, find us in worship, be present with us as we fast and focus on you as we wait. Amen.

SATURDAY | MARK 15:42-47

It may seem odd to read an account of Jesus' death even as we prepare for his birth. And yet, there are times in our lives when our greatest fears are realized and it feels as if God is absent. Joseph of Arimathea was waiting for the kingdom of God, and despite Jesus' death he took courage and asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Where do you need to take courage and speak or act as you wait and look for God's kingdom?

God of grace and glory, sometimes we look for you and cannot find you. You tell us that if we knock, the door will be opened to us, and if we seek we will find. Yet, some days we pound on the door and it remains locked. Grant us courage, especially in those times and circumstances when our waiting for you feels as if it is in vain. Help us to do the next right thing in your name, despite our doubts and pain. Amen.