

Advent is here, the Christmas season has begun, decorations are going up...  
explain advent wreath.

In the church, Advent is a time that we are supposed to be preparing our hearts for Christ to be born into this world. A time for slow peaceful meditations of joy /love/peace/hope next to our softly burning candles...

But it often it feels more like a season when time speeds up, when our ever-filling calendars and to-do lists dominate our focus.

Advent is supposed to be a time for making room and priming our hearts to treasure Christ.

Yet, We know all too well what it is like for December to blur by and to arrive on the doorstep of Christmas as another exhausted casualty of our consumeristic age.

... Organizing ... Shopping ... Planning ... Wrapping ... Budgeting ... Stressing ... Eating ... Baking ... Stress-eating

You've carved out this 1 hour, before you off and rushing again... to take this moment of waiting

### **1. what we are waiting for?**

### **2. how we should wait?**

(for Q#1) Is. 11 gives us a beautiful picture of what peaceable kingdom looks like

- Wolf & lamb
- Leopard & kid
- Calf & lion led by a child
- Cow & bear & lion grazing together
- Baby playing next to snakes

Prophet Isaiah said these words to his community in 8<sup>th</sup> C BCE

- Said them to a people that had just been conquered by the Assyrians
- A people whose future looked as far a possible from this pkingdom

- For the first listeners of Is. words, they would have imagined a new beginning for Judah's monarchy
- In this hopeful future Yhwh's spirit will alight upon the ruler, resulting in justice for the poor and lowly of the land (verse 4) and a fundamental reordering of creation's priorities (verses 6-9). Life emerges from death. This is the way of Israel's God.

This vision of a reordered creation is remarkable.

-predators dwelling with prey

-the most vulnerable (children) free to play with the most dangerous

But the imagery goes deeper when you read this text against their ancient near Eastern background

- the royal propaganda = (as seen on carvings/statues) frequently depict royalty encounter predatory animals, especially lions
- noteworthy to see the royal child depicted as a shepherd among lions
- kings would have depicted fighting/killing/dominance over lions
  - killing a lion what a sign of divine favor (one's worthiness to rule)
- NOT HUNTING -HE IS LEADING THEM OR LIVING AMONG THEM
  - Davidic ruler portrayed here does not eliminate the threat, but eliminates predatory violence

This text is included in Xmas scriptures because it points to Jesus, it points to this unlikely king that was to usher in this unlikely kingdom of God's reign.

As Christians, we make this link from Is. to Jesus, but if you compare J's ministry with this ruler in Is 11, you'll see that this is not exactly what J ushered in:

- evil still flourishes
- predators continue to kill their prey
- violence is still done on God's holy place (v9)
- earth is far from being "full of the knowledge of the Lord" v9
  - on the whole, J's ministry falls short of this vision
  - appears X's victory remains a hidden victory or even an unaccomplished one

We might conclude either J was a failed messiah? or his ministry is incomplete.

still in the in between time, b/w Eden & Is. vision of peaceable kingdom

Jesus/ us in the in b/w time, Jesus showing us how we should live in b/w

**what are we waiting for?** This. Is. peaceable kingdom where peace, justice and grace have the final word not only for us humans, but for all of creation.

**Q2: what do we do while we wait? how should we be waiting?**

We all wait, none of us like it: But we wait in traffic, in grocery stores, in holding patterns, for the one ahead of us, for the doctor, for a spouse, for a baby, for retirement, for sermons to get over, or for Christmas to come.

2<sup>nd</sup> passage Matt 3 fits in (John the Baptist) (most un-Xmasy character in xmas)

“Repent, change your direction, turn around for the kingdom of heaven has come near. Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Advent points to xmas, just as John the Baptist points to Jesus (all Renaissance art has John physically pointing)

And so Advent is the perfect time for us/ for the church to point ourselves back at Jesus, to think afresh about how to join God in the movement towards a world this is more like that peaceable kingdom. (new years resolution: today start of church calendar)

There may be no better guide than John the Baptist whose instructions for preparations are condensed into one word. “Repent.”

repent = feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one’s wrongdoings or sin

\*not the biblical meaning here (metanoia in Greek) = denotes change of mind, a reorientation, a fundamental transformation, a new way of loving others or God.

\*Those 2 are considerably different!

Our modern def'n – brings up feelings of guilt, or acknowledging your depravity

Metanoia = aligning yourself to God and X

\*not a message of guilt but of seizing an opportunity.

Then John speaks to Pharisees & Sadducees

- these are religious leaders and rule keepers
- the ones that know the scriptures and have grown up in religious tradition
- a lot of similarities to us

The repentance, that John speaks of, is not a moment or experience in which we 'come to God' rather repentance is a perpetual state of willingness to align ourselves with God's will.

When we align ourselves, John says (harshly) bearing fruit will be the sign of a changed (metanoia) heart

“... Bear fruit worthy of repentance/a changed perspective/heart. Don't presume you've got it all figured out by claiming the faith as your own, as if that's all you have to do.” *(my paraphrasing)*

A changed heart means: Our waiting is not inactive – rather it is very active

Just like growing plants, which includes a lot of waiting for harvest, you don't sit idly by after you plant the seed. no, you weed/ water /prune / tend. Your waiting is active and concrete.

What are our actions to wait during xmas? If we are to use this time to align ourselves with X. HOW?

INWARD:

- Spend time in prayer (alone, in families, in groups)
- Read & Meditate on scripture -you could take the 4 lectionary texts each week and use those to focus your reading or another resource
- start(re) an advent tradition of devotions.  
(explain optional resources list)

## OUTWARD:

- Act out Gods kingdom of justice, but feed the poor/needy, stand up for the oppressed -human and natural world
- Mend relationships towards peace and love

Work on aligning our lives with Gods will

- there are already many parts that already align, but when we are honest with ourselves, there's closer alignment that we can do

If we spent even fraction of the time we spend on all the other xmas preparations (baking, decorating, shopping, parties) on preparing ourselves spiritually for xmas, I wonder what our xmas would look like.

- But those other things are more fun.
- While harder to list or quantify, the spiritual rewards will be even greater.

**1. what we are waiting for** -Gods peaceable kingdom as Is. describes and Jesus show how it's possible through his living

**2. how we should wait** -by practicing to align ourselves with God's kingdom ways

We begin this season with a call to REPENT, time to get your metanoia on

Repent because something new is coming, that is where our hope springs forth at xmas, in the hope that something new is coming. Waiting is not for the faint of heart. It takes extreme hope, in fact it shouts in the face of hopelessness.

Your hope will say that love will come, love will be born, and we are willing to wait for it and demonstrate that hope through how we live/love this Advent season.