



WHAT CAN'T WAIT

ADVENT 2019

ABOUT THE THEME

Advent is a season of waiting, but is idle waiting what God wants of us? In preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together—what things can't wait? What demands our immediate attention? What requires our work and preparation? What is it that God can't wait for? Is it our praise, reconciliation, and proclamation? Is it the end of suffering, isolation, and fear? This Advent, we are invited to join in imagining, prioritizing, and preparing. As we wait, what can't?

DECEMBER 1ST | 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT | GOD'S PROMISED DAY CAN'T WAIT

(Hope can't wait) ISAIAH 2:1-5 & PSALM 122

These texts speak of God's promised day—a day when wars end, swords are beaten into plowshares, and spears become pruning hooks. On the first Sunday in Advent, we focus on the need to hold onto hope, to continue dreaming of and reaching for God's promised day where there will be peace and all will know love. How does this unrelenting hope change us? How does it change our world?

DECEMBER 8TH | 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT | REPENTANCE CAN'T WAIT

(Peace can't wait) ISAIAH 11:1-10 & MATTHEW 3:1-2

Isaiah points to a peace this world has yet to know—peace where the wolf lies with the lamb and a child shall lead us. John the Baptist invites us to believe in this vision of peace, but first, we must repent of the ways we turn away from God and do harm to others and ourselves. Only through honest confession can we seek reconciliation and become vessels of God's peace, facilitators of the Kingdom of God drawn near.

DECEMBER 15TH | 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT | DELIGHT CAN'T WAIT

(Joy can't wait) ISAIAH 35:1-10 & LUKE 1:46B-55

Mary's Magnificat shows us deep and holy joy—joy that trusts God's promises of restoration, new beginnings, food for the hungry, and justice for the wronged. In Isaiah, creation sings with abundant joy, blooming open like a crocus. What does it look like to delight in God's goodness? How do we respond to God's work in the world with joy? How can we be singers of joy?

DECEMBER 22ND | 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT | COURAGE CAN'T WAIT

(Love can't wait) MATTHEW 1:18-25

As Christmas draws near, we meditate on the courage required of both Joseph and Mary. When Joseph learns of Mary's pregnancy, he decides to avert scandal and dismiss her quietly. But when an angel comes to him in a dream, he chooses to trust the angel and act counter to social and gender norms—all so that the world might know love. How might we practice courageous, counter-cultural love? How can we be brave enough to love one another and respond to God's call in our lives?

DECEMBER 24TH | CHRISTMAS EVE | WHAT CAN'T WAIT?—MESSIAH HAS COME!

LUKE 2:1-14(15-20) & ISAIAH 9:2-7

Christmas reminds us that God couldn't wait for the end of war, suffering, or human injustice. God couldn't wait, so God broke through the shadows to bring light and love. God couldn't wait to be love in flesh—and neither should we.

Texts for November 24, 2019

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (NSRV)

26 When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, “Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.” ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the Lord your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.

⁸The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.” You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. ¹¹Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.



Luke 17:11-19

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw

that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?” ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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Reflection & Questions

Both of today’s passages deal with **giving thanks** for gifts received. More importantly, both involve **noticing** or **remembering** the gifts that have received and then **acting out gratitude** for them.

The passage from **Deuteronomy** is part of Moses’ final address, on the last day of his life, before the people of Israel enter the Promised Land without him. He gives them instructions for observing what would come to be known as the annual Feast of Weeks that included a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. They are to offer their best to God, not what is left over, as they **remember who they are and what God has done for them**. Moses calls them to remember that they are God’s people, chosen, rescued from slavery, and given a new life and purpose. They will no longer live as aliens who labor for others, or wander in the desert dependent upon the manna that God provided, but they will be settled enough to labor for themselves and grow their own crops, enough to care for themselves and the Levites who were not land owners, but priests who tended to the Temple, as well and those who live as aliens among them just as they did in Egypt. They are **called upon to give to God for the sake of others**. They will continue to live into the promise God made to their ancestor, Abraham, to be a light to the nations.

Interestingly, in **Luke’s passage**, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, the same place where the annual Feast of Weeks still took place. But this time it is the non-Jew, the Samaritan, who notices what Jesus has done for him, and returns to act out his gratitude. It is the Samaritan who demonstrates the basic Christian response to God: gratitude for the gift of life, gratitude for the world, gratitude for the dear people God has given us to enrich and grace our lives. The basic Christ experience is gratitude to God for God’s love in Jesus Christ and the accompanying gift of hopeful confidence and wholeness and wellness that comes with it, regardless of the worldly circumstances in which we find ourselves.

For what are you grateful this day?

How will you act out your gratitude?