

## Candle of Waiting

Scripture: James 5:7 – 10 & John 2:1 – 11

There is probably nothing more difficult than the act of waiting! Think about all the waiting you do – you wait in line, you wait in traffic, you wait for a call or message, you wait in a doctor's office, or you wait for love. It seems that life is just one waiting time into another waiting time. We spend a lot of time waiting! Let me pause and allow you the time to think of the last time you waited. (pause) Ok, if you could not think of the last time you waited – you were just waiting for me to stop your waiting to remember when you waited!

Let me tell you the story of a person who waited a long time – For 29 years after WWII ended, Hiroo Onoda hid in the jungle of a remote island in the Philippines waiting for news about WWII. Hiroo refused to believe his country had surrendered. The Japanese military had dispatched Hiroo to this remote island with orders to spy on the Allied forces.

Long after a peace treaty had been signed and hostilities had ceased, Hiroo remained in the wilderness waiting. In 1974, Hiroo's commanding officer traveled to the remote island to find him. He finally convinced Hiroo that the war was over and his waiting would end!

For three decades, Hiroo lived a meager and isolated existence because he refused to surrender. Hiroo refused to believe the conflict was done and he waited for 29 years! Hiroo waited in the jungle for word of how WWII came out. He waited 29 years!

Waiting can cause anxiety. The anxiousness we feel while waiting is only exacerbated when we are watching and waiting. Putting those two things together – waiting and watching – can cause great anxiety.

Have you ever watched a pot of water while you are waiting for it to boil? Or maybe you have stared at a microwave while it cooked your dinner. When you are watching what you were waiting for – time seems to go even slower!

In this second week of Advent, the time we have spent waiting for the birth of Christ can seem laborious. The more we wait, the more anxious we become about Christmas.

Do we know the glory that is in waiting? Waiting prepares us, shapes us, molds us, and engages us in what is to come. A mother who must wait for the birth of her child is also granted the beauty of preparation. She can plan for a place for her baby to rest after giving birth.

A people who must wait for the coming of the Lord also receive the beauty of being able to prepare our hearts. We can fashion spaces for the Holy Spirit to come in and dwell with us!

Advent is a tough season for children! Does a child know the glory that is in waiting or is a child only consumed with the wanting of presents at Christmas? Does a child know that waiting prepares them, shapes them, molds them, and engages them in what is to come?

We lite the candle of waiting today. Consider the times and places where it is hard to be patient. How might our waiting and anxiety allow us to reach the end without holding the beauty as we wait? Where might we see opportunities for preparation to receive the Holy Spirit? I think beauty and opportunity can be found when we worship together each and every Sunday even though it is on YouTube!

Think of this – in Christianity, the more we understand what God is and what Christ is, our purpose will appear and credible miracles will occur! Advent can be a time of deeper and enriching experiences. Advent can be a time of greater understanding of the miracles presented to us by our faith. Advent can help us welcome Jesus. Advent can allow hope to come through our waiting.

The miracles of the New Testament are just what one might expect if one believed that nature had been invaded by the God who created nature. Think of the miracles Christ did – the miracle of the wedding in Cana.

In our Gospel reading from John, we have the miracle of changing water into wine. I was at the Church in Cana three years ago in my trip to the Holy Land and I discovered the true story of the miracle in Cana. Right outside of the church in Cana is the Cana Wine Company. I believe that when Mary, Jesus' mother, asked Jesus to help the wedding out because they were running out of wine – Jesus slipped the wedding planner some extra dollars to go to the Cana Wine Company and buy more wine and to pour it into the wine vats.

I hope you know I am kidding, but while at the Church in Cana three years ago, six couples renewed their wedding vows and I was part of the renewal service. I do wish my wife would have been with me because I really wanted to renew our vows at the Church in Cana. Let me also share, that the wine we drank afterwards was very good from the Cana Wine Company!

Enough with that – This miracle of changing water into wine tells us that the God of wine has arrived. During this miracle, Jesus does in a moment what God does in nature slowly each year in making wine. When we see the purpose of both Jesus' miracles and his coming, it is easier to understand and believe.

In John's Gospel, John calls the miracles of Jesus – signs. He certainly meant to teach us that the miracles of Jesus said something about the One who performed them. Jesus certainly performed miracles out of compassion when he healed or raised the dead. Jesus undoubtedly performed miracles out of love like the miracle of turning water into wine was out of love for his mother, Mary, the one who asked Jesus to do something. But Jesus also performed miracles or signs to demonstrate his messiahship.

So, what can you do while you wait? Go and tell! Go and tell! Go and tell what you have heard. Go and tell what you have seen. The disciples went and told about the blind receiving sight. The disciples went and told about the lame walking. The disciples went and told about the lepers being cleansed. The disciples went and told about the deaf hearing. The disciples went and told about the dead be raised. The disciples of Christ brought good news to the poor and outcast.

We are Disciples of Christ, so let us go and tell!

Make use of this time of waiting and go and tell!

Let us pray:

Dear God, we are waiting for you, even in our anxiousness and uncertainty, we wait. Remind us today to prepare to receive all that you have in store for us in this Advent season.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the miracles and signs you have performed to show us why you came. Help us to go and tell your story!

AMEN.

