

Chris Murphy

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Scripture: Isaiah 7: 14

Sermon Title: The Coming Messiah

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14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. (This is the Word of God)

Prayer....

Introduction:

Friends, the first Sunday of Advent we remember the season of waiting for the Coming Messiah. For me, just saying the word wait feels hard. We live in an anxious society where waiting is frowned upon. Who wants to wait? Whether in the grocery line or the drive thru, most of us generally hate to wait. This fall my family is waiting for the renovation of a new bathroom and shower in our home. We

had an issue with a leaky shower pan that required significant repair.

It has been a journey to wait for the repairs to be done over the last couple months as our contractors have been doing good work. We look forward to the completion of the project, but for now it is hard to wait. I know what you might be thinking. These are first world problems. In other cultures, waiting is a natural part of life.

Sometimes people have to wait to collect water for drinking or to collect crops for food. In our western culture, we struggle to wait even for the most basic things.

Even Advent Season for me feels awkward as we wait for the coming Messiah. Why? Well, because Jesus already came. So why do we remember the value of waiting. Why have Christians for centuries reminded us that waiting is part of the story of the coming of Jesus?

I think there are two main reasons. To understand the incarnation of God in Jesus, we need to realize that the Jewish people spent centuries waiting for the Messiah to come. When Jesus was born it

had been 400 years since the prophets had spoken about the coming of the Messiah. Many people might have thought that God had forgotten them or at least they were weary of waiting. People who identify as Jewish today are still waiting for the coming of the Messiah, but as we know, the early followers of Jesus saw him as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies.

The prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 today reminds us that a young woman will bear a child and call his name Immanuel. Immanuel means God with us. We understand this prophecy fulfilled in the story of Mary the mother of Jesus. We will explore her story next Sunday. It is both profound and miraculous that people were given prophecies about the coming Messiah. I wonder how Mary felt when she read Isaiah 7:14 again after meeting the Angel Gabriel, realizing that she was fulfilling prophecy. Remembering that Jesus was also known as Immanuel, God with us is a great comfort for all who

experience suffering. God with us in our suffering. God became one of us in Jesus.

It is good for us to remember that much waiting happened before Jesus- Immanuel came. The Jewish people had experienced great oppression from the Roman Empire and they longed for the Messiah to come with military power to overthrow Rome. Instead, the Messiah, God with us, comes as a humble baby boy born to a relatively poor teenage couple. In the gospels, we learn that this baby grows up to be a rabbi, a new kind of prophet who did not champion physical violence but instead overcame evil with love and sacrifice.

So friends we remember during this Advent Season that the Messiah came to an oppressed group of people who were looking for liberation. This is a good season to mourn for those in our world that our feeling oppression today. We remember places of war or other forms of unrest. Israel and Gaza, Ukraine and Russia, the Southern

Sudan, Haiti. These are a few countries we hear about, but there are many more where suffering and violence continue to foster pain. In this season of Advent we wait and pray for peace in these regions and we pray that God will bring ceasefires and diplomacy to situations where violence continues to erupt. We ask for peace and love to reign and for the waiting to end. We cry out for justice and peace.

Advent is also a time to remember that one day Jesus Christ will return to earth to set things right. One day the lion will lie down with the lamb and peace will reign. One day, all of creation will be restored. For many who live in poverty or who are grieving the loss of loved ones and for many who are living with illness or the pain of broken relationships, it is hopeful and comforting to know that our Christian faith promises that Christ will ultimately make all things new.

My prayer for each of us this Advent is that we will be in touch with our emotions. What are you waiting for? What situation do you desire for Christ to make right? Maybe, you are praying for peace in the middle east or in some other part of our world. Maybe, you are waiting for peace in your family or in another close relationship. Maybe, you are longing for Jesus to free you from some form of oppression, sickness, or from habits that make life hard to enjoy. It is okay to cry out to God for the waiting to end and for Jesus to come and make things right in your life. It is also helpful to remember that waiting is part of the journey of life.

Maybe the Advent Season is a good thing. Maybe, we need to remember that waiting is part of our story. Even though Jesus came to a humble teenage couple years ago and even though Jesus grew up and became the Savior who reigns, we still live in a world where waiting for the coming Messiah feels like an ongoing journey of sorts. Yes, Jesus came and is here now through the power of the

Holy Spirit, but we still are waiting for the kingdom of God to be fully realized.

Friends, let us not hurry through Advent. Instead, take time to feel your emotions. To express your desires and doubts to a loving Savior. Remember those who are waiting for the basic necessities of life like food, shelter, work, friendship, and peace. Let us find ways to make this season one of deep connection to Christ and great compassion for our neighbors. And for those of you who experience the holidays as a time of grief, we are here for you. May our church family remind you that you are not alone even as you experience the journey of grief.

I found a prayer for the first Sunday of Advent that I wish to share as we enter this season together and as we support one another.

“Holy One, we wait and hope for your peace. We live in the promise of your love. As the days darken and the nights lengthen, light our way with your promised presence. Prepare us to celebrate your

birth, and guide us to create your kingdom on earth. In hopeful
expectation we pray. AMEN”