

Dec 5 2010 Com. Malachi 4:1-6

WE ARE WAITING LORD

Last night we had the opportunity to go to Milliken for their Christmas Vespers, “Shout the Good News.” Inside their program were these words: “Joy! We read the word in Christmas cards, sing it in carols, see it on store windows and yearn for it in our personal lives. At this time of year the word carries more weight than usual as even the most cynical among us opens up to the promise of this happy season. But our hopes are frequently shattered when our attempts to create joyous holiday events simply leave us exhausted. We try to purchase happiness and satisfaction. Our nagging emptiness prompts a well-worn question, “Why is the path to joy so complex, so elusive?” Here is their answer. “Shout the Good news and lean our hearts to hear.” Waiting! We are waiting Lord.

On our way to the office on Thursday we heard a song by Frank Sinatra called “The Best is yet to come.” I thought, WOW that goes along with our theme for Advent. That’s what the joy of Christmas is about remembering and celebrating the best gift that God could give anyone, His Son.

You have already heard our choir sing this morning’s theme, “Waiting.” The introduction to the song says, “When we welcome God’s Spirit into our hearts and minds,

we experience the comfort and the power of God's presence. So now we wait, that God will move among us as we listen to the story of the Christmas miracle."

Waiting! We hate to do that. No matter if you're waiting in a checkout line, or sitting in traffic, we hate to wait. Mothers-to-be hate to wait 9 months for their baby to be born. And when the baby is late, well, they want it to be over quickly. How about Abraham and Sarah or Zechariah and Elizabeth who waited to be blessed with a child. You'll hear more about them next week. Both happened in their old years. Isaac to Sarah, John the Baptist to Elizabeth. Waiting... like those of yesteryear we too are waiting to hear God's voice and receive his miracle for us... Lord we are waiting.

Waiting. Simeon and Anna waited many years serving in the Temple. When Simeon laid eyes on baby Jesus he praised God for he had seen the salvation of the Lord and he could now die in peace. And Anna when she saw Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus she jumped with joy, the Messiah, the one for years she and her people had waited for was here.

Folks the Hebrew people were waiting and waiting for years, in fact for many years hoping, praying, that God would send the Promised One. They prayed then they waited. They prayed and then they waited more years. Then they prayed and still waited. It wasn't as if God hadn't heard their prayers, or didn't care. He was still their God, and they, even when they didn't walk the walk, were still his people. One day God would send the promised Messiah, who would transform his people, give them peace, joy, healing,

provides forgiveness and salvation. But for them, those early followers of God in Malachi's day, they waited.

I think that is what the people in Malachi's time were dealing with. "God, we need to see you NOW!" might have been their cry. "Surely the day is coming," Malachi warns his listeners who have been wavering in their faith. *"The day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left for them."* That's the bad news for some. Hear now the Good News. *"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wing."* So as the people struggled with the things of that time, Malachi's message is one that says not to give up hope. Don't turn away as if God is not among them. Wait and see what the Lord will do. Continue to walk with him because he leads you to the greater promise land, greater than the land that their forefathers entered. Just wait on the Lord. Simple message that has been passed on throughout the years. Wait! Listen! Be Patient! God is still working!

"Waiting, we are waiting, Lord. Waiting, we are waiting, Lord. Fill the mind 'til we find your light, your truth." That's how our theme song began today. "Fill the mind till we find your light, your truth." That's what Christmas is about, finding the light that leads to salvation. Jesus said *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* He also said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the*

life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The truth came and dwells amongst God’s people. He is here today in this Sanctuary. He is here in the communion we will celebrate in a few moments. He is present among us.

Just as the Hebrew nation waited and waited for the coming of the Lord, we wait. Just as they waited for the promises to happen we wait. We know the end to the story, for Christ did come, did die, did rise again, and is present with us. His promise is never to forsake any who come to him to find peace, joy and forgiveness. We wait for the time when we all get to heaven, for a day of rejoicing that will be.

So until that time let’s continue to wait patiently.

From the song three things. Waiting is one of them.

Second, is listening. That’s another tough one. In order to hear his voice one needs to be silent. I must admit that’s a harder one for me. But remember God gave us two ears’ to hear, and only one mouth to speak. Elijah, after taking on the prophets of Baal ran for his life and was told by God’s messenger to go to the mountain and wait for God. When he got to the cave there was a mighty wind blowing and Elijah ran out to see if that was God’s billowing voice calling to him, but it wasn’t. So he went back and waited. Then came an earthquake that shook the whole mountain, bumping him all around as he made his way to the entrance. He cried out, “Is that you, Lord God Almighty?” but no answer.

Dejectedly back he went to wait in silence till the storm was over. Then came a fire. He could feel the heat all around him, yet not burning, much like the burning bush experience Moses had. He hurried to the entrance this time believing this must be the Lord God coming out of the fire. But when he cried out no answer once again. He retreated inside and waited. He could have began singing, "Waiting Lord, I am waiting Lord." Then came a deafening silence, so much silence it was eerie, like being in the center of a storm. After a few moments, Elijah felt compelled to check and see what was going on outside the cave and it was at that moment, in the silence of the day, he heard God's voice speaking to him.

The Psalmist writes, *"Be still and know I am God... I will be exalted in the earth."*

Folks, we need to be silent before the Lord in order to hear his voice. With all the busyness of the Christmas season, sometimes we forget the true meaning of Christmas. Oh, we know that we are getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birthday and all that, but sometimes we get overwhelmed by the season, the shopping and all the other stuff that we miss the message of Christmas. So when you are at a Christmas program or movie, check out the message that it brings, a message of hope and joy for on Christmas Christ was born.

"Listening, we are listening Lord...let us hear your word of hope and joy for us today."

The final word is our old buddy patience. “Give us patience Lord. When we pray, give us faith that you hear our prayers.”

Lately we’ve heard a lot about having patience. And it is during this season perhaps when our patience is tried the most in stores that are crowded, with sales persons who are overwhelmed, with traffic that is more crowded than at other times of the year... with the slippery roads, or even getting into and out of a town where they are working on railroad crossings. Give us patience, Lord.

Patience is a virtue that comes by of all things, waiting. So wait patiently in lines, in traffic areas that move slowly. Wait patiently for healing of the body, and sometimes for answered prayers. Be patient. Keep waiting for one day you will see the Glory of God.

This morning God invites us to come to his table of grace, to be silent before him focusing on the baby in the manger who grew to be savior of the world, OUR SAVIOR. As we enter into the final weeks of this Advent season I hope you are preparing, waiting, trusting, and seeking a renewal of God’s Spirit in your lives this Christmas season. I pray we never take Christ’s birth lightly. Let us remember the best is yet to come.

This morning Lord, “We welcome you with open hearts.”