

Sermon Starter – Waiting for the Kingdom

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

“It is good therefore that we be prepared. Our ignorance of the day of Christ’s return should provoke us to be careful as we eagerly await his coming.”

—Hilary of Poitiers (AD 315- 368)

The word “wait” is of German origin and means one who stays awake and watches. In English we usually think of wait as a verb, but it can also be a noun: a wait is a night watchman. In England a wait also came to mean a band of musicians who played at public functions to entertain the crowd and hold their attention.

By the Fourth Century it was obvious that Christ’s return, as anticipated by the early Church, was not coming as soon as expected. With the delay came renewed vigor on the part of church writers for diligent wakeful waiting. As this waiting stretched out over the centuries, prophetic reminders of Christ’s imminent return rallied the faithful to sell their possessions, or gather on hill tops, and even, in one case, overthrow a city state (Munster, Germany, during the radical reformation).

In this first Sunday of Advent we return once again to a message that calls for a heightened sense of anticipation that something miraculous is about to happen—God is about break into our midst. Christ’s promised return will be realized. And so against the weight of history’s long wait we might ponder the following questions in preparation for this Sunday. In what form and how do we expect Christ’s return? Is Christ’s return a singular event or a moment repeated countless times over, or in some paradoxical way both a singular event and repeated innumerable times in history? How has lethargy overtaken our waiting? How has wakeful attentiveness opened up new vistas of God’s presence?

How might we, as the church, be a wait, a group of people who sustain in the world a readiness for the Kingdom of God?

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