

- 1 **What Are You Waiting For?**
- 2 **Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting,
"Clear the way through the wilderness
for the LORD!
Make a straight highway through the wasteland
for our God!
4 Fill in the valleys,
and level the mountains and hills.
Straighten the curves,
and smooth out the rough places.
5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
The LORD has spoken!" Isaiah 40:1-5**
- 3 **Advent is about waiting.**
- It's about waiting for and anticipating the birth of Christ.
 - It's about preparing for it.
- 4 **Waiting also has a lot to do with hope and expectation.**
- What are you waiting for this morning?
 - For the end of the semester and a nice Christmas break?
 - Seeing family and friends over the holidays.
 - A positive change in a relationship.
 - A new opportunity.
 - But often the change can't just happen on the outside.
 - It has to happen on the inside.
 - It's a matter of something deeper – a transformation.
 - So the question really is, "Am I prepared to change?"
- 5 **To tell you the truth, I don't think I heard the word "advent" until I went to seminary.**

- Growing up as a kid in southeast Texas, we'd sing some Christmas songs around the holidays.
- We might even have a Christmas cantata or special program.
- And we always had a special missions offering to support the missionaries.
 - For Southern Baptists, it was the Lottie Moon Christmas offering for St. Lottie
 - We took one up for Lottie every year.
 - I began to think, "Are we ever going to pay that thing off?"
- Of course, as a kid I was mostly thinking about the gifts I wanted for Christmas
- Oh yeah – us kids would always be praying for a few snowflakes.
- We were so jealous of all those lucky kids up north who got all that snow!

6  **But then Christmas day would come.**

- We didn't so much intentionally prepare for it.
- Christmas day would finally arrive after weeks of waiting, we'd tear into the presents and then share a Christmas feast. In the days that followed, we'd hunker down for the winter, and wait for spring.

7  **Later in life I learned that Advent is really all about preparation and waiting.**

- We are preparing our hearts to receive the fullest meaning of the birth of Christ.
- In a spiritual sense we are praying that he will in some way be born anew in our heart.
- It's about that inner change in our hearts.

8  **That's what our passage from Isaiah is about this morning.**

- The Jews were looking for a rebirth of their faith.

- This was around the time of the exile in Babylon in the early 6th century B.C.
- In fact Isaiah, wrote these words before the Jews were taken into exile.
- Even before going through the valley, Isaiah was saying there is hope on the other side.
- The Jews would return from exile and experience a renewal – a rebirth – of faith.

9  **The way they conceptualized this was the coming of the Messiah.**

- They were saying get ready – prepare a highway for our God.
 - Knock down the mountains, fill in the valleys.
 - Make it straight and smooth.
- They were saying get ready to receive the king in all his glory.

10  **5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!” Isaiah 40:5 NLT**

11  **Now the Jews experienced this as a renewal of faith once they returned from exile.**

- They rebuilt Jerusalem and it's walls.
- They rebuilt and rededicated the temple.
- Their faith was renewed and transformed.
- There was light on the other side of the dark night for exile.
- There was a new hope!

12  **Now Christians have understood these words in broader, prophetic sense.**

- The King is coming! And his name is Jesus!
- He appeared some 6 centuries later, not born in a palace but in a stable.
- He appeared not rich and powerful, but as a peasant –

meek and lowly.

- As usual God surprised us.
- He broke through our expectations of what we want, and gave us what we need – a suffering servant dying for our sins.

13 **But what about you? What are you waiting for this morning?**

- Or put another way, ask yourself – “Where do I need to experience God’s presence in my life?”
- Where does the change need to happen in me through the coming of his presence?
- Sarah Young writes using the first voice – as if Jesus is speaking to us directly.

14 **“Men tend to multiply duties in their observance of religion. This practice enables them to give Me money, time, and work without yielding up to Me what I desire the most – their hearts.”**

15 **“Rules can be observed mechanically. Once they become habitual, they can be followed with minimal effort and almost no thought. These habit-forming rules provide a false sense of security, lulling the soul into a comatose condition.”**

16 **“What I search for in My children is an awakened soul that thrills to the Joy of My Presence! I created mankind to glorify Me and enjoy Me forever. I provide the Joy; your part is to glorify me by living close to Me.” (Jesus Calling, Sarah Young)**

17 **So what are you waiting for this morning?**

- Where do you need deep change and inner transformation?
- As we enter communion this morning let the Lord

Speak to you.

- What are you waiting for? How is Jesus calling you to draw closer to him?

18 **Reflect on these words of Celtic poet, Alice Taylor in her poem, "Praying Place".**

19 ***You are always there in a quiet room
Waiting for me to come to you.***

***This morning in a hilly field,
Sitting on the corner of a stone cattle trough,
Listening to the water tumbling down the hill Into
the silent river,
Watching the crows fly to work across the sky,
Why was I surprised to find you there?***

***Lord, teach me to leave space in my mind
So that you can always be there.***

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