

Trinity Church in the City of Boston

Advent 1, 2022

- [Isaiah 2:1-5](#)
- [Matthew 24:36-44](#)
- [Psalm 122](#)

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

What are you waiting for? (An Advent 1 Sermon)

I will light Candles this Christmas;
Candles of joy despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,

Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the year long.¹

What ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
It's a question I received a lot growing up.

Why aren't you in the car? Why aren't you ready? What are you waiting for????

And the reasonings got very creative:

Are you waiting on a written invitation?

Are you waiting for the stars to align?

Are you waiting for the right group of people to sign up first?

Are you waiting for your name to be called?

Are you waiting for ticketmaster to let you in out of the waiting room?

(Too soon, Taylor Swift fans?)

Let's be honest,

We do a lot of waiting.

We wait in traffic,

We wait in lines,

We wait for the turkey to be done,

We wait for our teams to win, sometimes in double overtime, too!

And in our digital world, we have managed to avoid a lot of waiting....

We can now order online in advance, we can pay for it to be shipped directly to us rather than picking it up in person, We can pay for it to be ready— so we can do something else in the in-between time.

And I wonder....

What should we be doing in our waiting?

Some of the digital options allow us to multi-task, I am in no way condemning this concept.

What are we multi-tasking with though?

I am just wondering are we just filling the time we receive with other non-important busy things?

What might we be avoiding?

What might we be burying deep down and “hiding from” in the fullness of our worlds?

When we wait for results....

Are we filling our time and hiding our anxiety and fear of death?

When we “are waiting” for sadness to pass,
are we ignoring the need for our own hearts to grieve and be broken open?

They say “Icebergs you only see 10% of what is going on... 90% is below the surface.”ⁱⁱ

Just like the ways we fill out time,

We show what we want to show, don't we?

We dress in certain ways, we share joys and selected sorrows on Social Media.

Think about it, we can even blur our backgrounds on zoom meetings.

Where might we take the time to unblur the things that our hearts might need us to be still to hear?

Where might we need to wait and know that we are not alone.

Where might we need to be still and know that we are enough?

Where are you taking a moment to plunging deeper?

To share your story?

Where have you found that you have been Waiting and Growing at the same time?

Our Gospel reading today is from the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus is speaking about what is to come and how then we, as disciples, should wait. He reminds the disciples that waiting and change is nothing new in their story.

Neither is change that comes with suffering.

Jesus reminds them of how then we should wait.

He invites the disciples, and in turn us, to use our time of waiting to be productive.

Be ready for the divine to interrupt you.

Be waiting and also digging deep to be ready for the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day and also the second coming, when we know not the time nor place.

We wait with hope and expectation.

Trinity Church in the City of Boston is an amazing mass of a building. And yet, it represents something much greater than what you can see..... It's roots go deeper, story runs deeper, it's identity is (DO I SAY IT out loud?) more than this building.

We gather here each week to worship God, See each other, AND to go deeper in our faith.

In our waiting we gather, seizing each moment to seek a God who loves us and invites us to know that love more deeply. Each week, we are invited to share a bit of our story, in all its unseemliness, it's messiness, it's incarnation (word made flesh).... And in our waiting, go deeper.

After services on Sunday, we give you the invitation to come downstairs, to gather underneath to go deeper. Sometimes, this invitation is through coffee and conversation. Sometimes, with a lecture. This week we invite you to go downstairs and create. Down below, you will find all the 'fixins' to create the traditional Advent wreath that marks time as we wait and prepare for Christmas.

The tradition of Advent Wreaths come from Germany. The story goes that "in 1839, Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-81), a pastor in Germany, built a wreath out of an old cartwheel to help the children in his mission school

count the days until Christmas. He added small candles to be lit every weekday and Saturday during Advent, and on Sundays, a large white candle was lit. Although it wasn't widely popular until the 19th century, German immigrants then brought the tradition with them to America in the 20th century."ⁱⁱⁱ

We continue to light these candles in the darkest time of our year in the northeastern corner of the northern hemisphere, when there is less and less physical light- our desire as Christians to see the great light in this world IS even more desperate.

We light candles to remind us that even on the darkest night, there is hope in our world.

We light candles to remind us that our loved ones are still with us even if they are no longer at the table this year, that their presence is still very near in our hearts.

We light candles amidst violence and senseless destruction, to remind us that we can be different, we can make change in this world and those lost will not be forgotten.

We light candles as we wait, together, for something more, a love deeper for us that we have yet to fully understand.

The miracle birth in Bethlehem which brought light into the world in the simplest of ways, a baby who threatened Kings and all of the political systems. Hope given to a world in need of healing.

The truth of the matter is, when you dig down deep, we are always waiting.

We are waiting for our name to be called, we are waiting to be fed, we are waiting because we simply aren't "there" yet.

We are waiting for this world to know and experience the deep love of God that transcends the outer packaging, the social media shininess, the uncertainty and the brokenness.

And as we wait in lines, with grace and impatience alike, we are not meant to be passive.

Rather, in each moment of waiting we have the opportunity to discover and delight in God's creation, delve into relationships that challenge us and are different.

Waiting is an adventure and while we might fail at doing this with love *every* moment of the day, the invitation is still there to delve below, to dig deeper and see the Divine..... as we try, try, try again to love God, Love our neighbors, and love ourselves.

What are we waiting for? Our journey continues today, let's wait with hope and expectation and dare I say it- joy. Knowing that we have work to do.

O Come O Come Emmanuel, God-with-us, in the depths of our lives, give light in this world and help us to wait with grace and patience.

Amen.

ⁱ Howard Thurman, Mood of Christmas

ⁱⁱ

https://www.lpi.usra.edu/education/explore/ice/activities/ice_action/iceberg/#:~:text=Icebergs%20float%20on%20the%20ocean,is%20concealed%20beneath%20the%20waves.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.thepeoplesfriend.co.uk/2018/12/12/the-story-of-the-advent-wreath/#:~:text=Like%20many%20beloved%20Advent%20traditions,count%20the%20days%20until%20Christmas.>