



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

November 23-29, 2020
Sermon by Rev. Kelley Lane
First Sunday of Advent
Sermon Title: "How Long?"

Notes from sermon on 11/22:	Things For Which to Pray This Week:
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Family Focus Question:

On this first Sunday of Advent, Christmas still seems far away. How can we wait with hope and expectation? Are there ways to make waiting more fun and productive?

Questions for Small Groups

- 1) As children, we eagerly await Christmas day. It seems like it will never come. But as adults, sometimes we get caught up in all the stress and business of the holiday season, dreading the arrival of Christmas day. Sometimes, in despair, we wish we could just avoid it all. How, this year, can we focus on the best and most meaningful/spiritual preparations for the day we celebrate and remember Christ's incarnation?
- 2) During Advent, we not only remember Christ's birth but we also look forward to Christ's return. How can we best prepare ourselves spiritually for Christ's return? How can we "keep awake"?
- 3) In verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah 64, the author reminds God that "we are all the work of your hand" and "we are all your people." What do these claims mean to you?

Monday, November 23: Read Isaiah 64:1-9

We are so tired of waiting. 2020 has been a marathon of waiting for school openings, gubernatorial mandates, election results, test results, and vaccine approvals. The finish line keeps getting pushed back, and now with "the holidays" approaching, this period of waiting threatens to push us over the edge. We want to resume "normal life," and miss our friends, family, schools, sports, and church activities. How are we to get excited about Christmas in the midst of all of this? How long, Lord, must we wait and endure and suffer until you deliver us?

Well, here's the good news: "Advent" literally means "coming," so the Advent season is a time of waiting...for something wonderful that we *know* is coming. This Advent season, we can learn to wait with hope even in difficult times. The prophet in today's reading reminds God that God is our creator and we

are all God's people. This relationship of intimacy is the basis for our hope. Let us make a decision to focus on developing our relationship with God this Advent season so we can more joyfully wait for the gifts that lie ahead for us, as well as enjoy the gifts surrounding us right now.

Tuesday, November 24: Read Mark 13:24-29

Waiting in hope does not mean denying the reality of present pain and suffering. Even in today's gospel, there are no promises that the path ahead will be easy or free from fear and drastic change. What is promised, however, is that Christ will come. As Christ's followers, we know that Christ has already arrived to deliver us from sin and death. We also await when Christ will come again to deliver us from all suffering. How can we fix our eyes this Advent season on the blessings we have already enjoyed through Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection 2000 years ago? How can we also fix our eyes on the promises of God's kingdom through God's love and grace brought to us through Christ?

Wednesday, November 25: Read Mark 13: 30-37

Waiting in the Biblical sense does not mean sitting around doing nothing- it means being prepared and alert. Preparing for Christ's arrival can take the form of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, reading scripture, fasting, and engaging in works of mercy. Being alert requires joyful expectation and presence, noticing the still small voices and hidden blessings God is sending us each day. How wonderful could the Advent season be if we spent it this way? What daily habits can we incorporate right now that can turn this time into one of the most hope-filled and relationship-building periods in our spiritual lives?

Thursday, November 26: Read 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Today we read that even though we are waiting, we do not have to wait to receive the spiritual gifts that allow us to fully love, help, heal, listen, build, lift up, resist, and empower. Yes, we are waiting for the revelation of God's plan to deliver us, but we are already equipped and empowered to be part of this plan. We can spread the light of Christ to others this Advent season, sharing our joy and hope and faith. We can help prepare the way for a new year and new world by abiding in God's love and Word to help our families, communities, and selves enter 2021 with a stronger knowledge of Christ's teachings and God's love. We are being called not to help us all go back to "normal," but prepare the way for what incredible plans God has in store for our world in 2021 and beyond.

Friday, November 27: Read Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

"Let your face shine," the psalmist asks God in today's brutally honest yet hope-filled psalm. Let us see your love and power and healing, Lord, so we can be saved. How and where does God's face "shine" in our world today? How can we more intentionally look for it, then reflect and magnify it to others? In this time of literal and figurative darkness, how can we help ourselves and others see the light of God that can save us? Today, let us spend time in earnest prayer with God, asking God to restore our economy, health, unity, hope, careers, school systems, families, church, and faith. Then, let us ask God to use us to be an agent of this restoration this Advent season.

Saturday, November 28: Scripture Memorization: Psalm 80:7

"Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

Sunday, November 29: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession: *Holy God, we confess that we thought we had matters in our own hands, fending for ourselves. When difficulties have presented themselves, we have tried to make things right on our own. It is obvious, we need help. We have lost our way. We sit in darkness. Send your Holy Spirit now to rescue us from ourselves. Transform our hearts and minds. Help us to truly love one another and Jesus so that we may shine your light in all the world. Amen.*