

**McCabe United Methodist Church**

“Waiting! It Is So Hard!”

**Mark 13:24-27**

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Pastor Art Scanson

Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable people are when nothing is going on? There is an awkwardness in silence.

Do you remember your first date? Then you no doubt also remember those long, painful periods of silence while riding together in the car or sitting together. Most of us, if not nearly all of us, are not very good at handling silence. We are also not very good at waiting.

An economist who read 2 Peter 3:8 was amazed. “*Lord, is it true that a thousand years for us is like one minute to you?*”

“Yes,” God said.

“*Then a million dollars to us must be like a penny to you,*” the economist said.

“Well, yes,” God said.

“*Will you give me one of those pennies?*” the economist asked.

“All right, I will,” the Lord said. “Wait here a minute.”

Or, the man in a restaurant. A waiter was passing by. “Excuse me,” said the man, “but how long have you been working here?”

“About a year,” replied the waiter.

The man said wearily, “In that case it couldn’t have been you that took my order.”

Yes, waiting is not fun. It is hard.

In the next few weeks our children will become restless with expectation and excitement as they wait the coming of Christmas. To say nothing of adults. This is also true for us as the people of God. Think about it. The Old Testament ended with the people of Israel waiting on a coming Messiah. The New Testament concludes with the followers of Jesus awaiting his return. Christians have waited now for more than 2,000 years.

Waiting is hard to do. Sherwood Wirt deals with waiting in his book entitled, *Freshness of the Spirit*. He shares how much of life is spent waiting. He goes on, “To think of all the [ordinary] people waiting today—at the airport, at the bus depot, at the doctor’s, at the amusement park, at the bowling alley, at the post office, the ticket office, the unemployment office, the Social Security office, Society has become a vast waiting room.”

Listen to Mark's gospel as he talks about our waiting for the return of the Messiah. Read Mark 13:24-27.

Along with Mark, much of the New Testament is devoted to the second coming of Christ. We must see those teachings in that tension between our looking to heaven and our involvement in living the Christian life on earth. For those of us who wait there some things for us to remember.

**First, is to be patient.** Yes, Jesus said that no one knows the hour or even the day when the Son of Man shall return. It is even suggested that he might come as a thief in the night. However, we must not seek to rush God or only look for that time of Jesus' return.

While looking to the sky we dare not ignore the responsibilities of the here and now. Our involvement in living as God's children in our daily lives.

You may have heard about the little boy who returned from his first summer camp. He was so proud to show his mother two badges he had won: one for making improvements in swimming, the other for naming the most birds on a nature hike.

But his mother noticed in his pocket there was a blue ribbon, so she asked what that was about. "Aw," he said, "I got that thing for having the neatest packed bag when we were ready to come home."

"I'm proud of you," his mother said.

"No big deal," he said. "I never unpacked it in the first place."

We can't spend all our time only looking to the return of Jesus. We must also unpack our bags and impact the here and now.

Another thing we must be aware of is that we shall not be taken in by false messiahs. And believe me, there are many.

The Rev. Jim Jones is an example. As he led hundreds of people to their death. We dare not think that will not happen again - remember these were not primitive savages in a far off land. They were educated citizens of our American culture.

Be patient. God has spend millions of years creating this world. It has been 2,000 years since Christ came into the world. Remember, God's timetable is not our timetable.

Another thing we must **remember is to be faithful.** That is our call - to be faithful. While we wait for Jesus' return, we are to be his body in the world, called to do his work. As the church has been serving the world in Jesus' name, now is not the time to let up. There is much to be done and more than enough ministries for each of us to be involved that no one of us should be found wanting.

Yes, we are Christ's body in the world today. There is time to be patient but

not idle. There is time to be faithful and serving.

Remember, those who predict the future have also been known as tomorrow's fools.

In 1881 the New York City YWCA announced typing lessons for women. Amazingly, angry protests greeted this announcement. Why? Many believed that the female constitution would break down under the strain.

Some of us can remember when girls were only allowed to play half-court in basketball for the same reason. Nobody envisioned what today's women athletes would be capable of.

Only God knows what God has in store for us. But when it is revealed let us be found prepared to do God's work of ministry.

We may be here another million years. Or, today may be our last day on earth. Jesus tells us to trust God and to wait. While at the same time be prepared - emotionally, mentally, spiritually - for whatever may come.

Yes, this may be the time or not. But it is the time to take stock of our lives to see if we are prepared for the unknowable future. This can be a very significant Advent with the Messiah becoming more real to us as we live each moment as if it were our last moment. With the good that we would do, that we do it now. The love that we would give, we give now. The commitment we make, we make it now as a part of this Advent season.

Advent is a time of waiting - not an idle time but a time of anticipation. And like little children may it be so filled with anticipation of what it can be - because we will seek every way we know how to be faithful and be prepared for Jesus to be a part of our life in these days. Only to imagine what Christmas will be like when we get there.

Believe me! If each of us will allow ourselves to be filled with anticipation like children - seeking to be faithful and prepared - our imagination will not hold our celebration! Won't you give God your best effort these next four weeks?