

Wait, Watch & Worship - Advent 2017

by Michael Flowers

The sermon emphasizes the importance of waiting, watching, and worshiping during the Advent season, and encourages listeners to be actively engaged in prayer, intercession, and worship.

Duration: 21:41

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Isaiah 64:1, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Revelation 22:20

Topics: "Advent"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses our tendency to want to fast forward and speed up the process of growth and construction in our lives. He uses the example of watching a video of a nine-year construction process in just three minutes, highlighting our impatience and desire for instant results. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's timing and walking in Kingdom time, rather than being consumed by chronological time. He encourages listeners to wait, watch, and worship in faith, trusting that God is at work even when we can't see it.

Transcript

You know, the very first words of the liturgical year are meant to capture the whole spirit of Advent, of the Advent season, and those first words read this morning from Lin Morse Brown, Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down. In the wisdom of the church, that scripture, that passage out of Isaiah was placed in the lectionary today to open us up to the whole thing of Advent. And it's meant to arouse us, to alert us, to awaken us to this kind of prayer.

This is a prayer of desperation. This is a prayer of longing. This is intercession par excellence.

It's beautiful. And, you know, Isaiah, I know in the heart of Isaiah and in the heart of the Holy Scriptures and this Holy Spirit who inspired this passage, it doesn't it's not supposed to stay on the page. This this passage, this scripture, this this longing, this burden is supposed to jump off and get inside of us because the word is supposed to live in us.

If we're to be the light of the world and the hope of the world, the word must live in us. And we know this. We know this.

Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down. There's just something visceral about that. Oh, it's so deep.

It's a deep longing in every human heart. Every human heart across the face of the earth has this cry. It may be buried.

It may be latent, but it's there because it's been placed by the one who speaks through his word, brings life and creativity into us. Come down so that the mountains would quake at your presence. As when fire candles brushwood in the fire causes water to boil to make your name known to your adversaries.

So that the nations might tremble at your presence, there it is again, we need your presence, Lord, when you did awesome deeds that we didn't even expect. Isn't that great that God is not limited to our faith and our expectancy? Sometimes at the lowest points in our lives, God is at the highest and it's grace upon grace, upon grace that comes to you in those times. He's going to do awesome deeds in your lives, brothers and sisters, things that you can't even foresee or expect.

He will do it. When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, we didn't expect you to come down, but you came down anyway. You didn't ask us if it was OK.

I just came. I invited myself, says the Lord. I'm crashing your party.

We need God to crash our parties. Amen. You came down and the mountains quaked at your presence.

And then this from ages past, no one has heard. And Paul quotes this in first Corinthians from ages past. No one has heard.

No ear is perceived. No eye has seen any God besides you who works. Another translation, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him, who works for those who wait for him.

Isaiah's prophetic and impassioned intercession wonders why God has allowed Israel's enemies, the Assyrians in this case. He wonders why he's allowed the Assyrians to prevail seemingly. And what he wants to do now for us, I believe, is to show us how to pray during Advent.

He's showing us how to pray during Advent. He's showing us how to pray behind enemy lines. Verse seven says this.

There is no one who calls on your name. And this is the New American Standard translation. I like this because it's a little bit more in your face.

Who arouses himself? Talking about spiritual arousal. We don't hear much of that anymore. We hear about all other kinds of arousals.

But he says, God, arouse yourself to take hold of me. There's something there in the participatory nature. Then, OK, I am I'm going to get on alert.

I'm going to seek the Lord. There's something pulling me in to arouse myself, to take hold of him. Well, that wasn't happening.

And Isaiah is praying for all of those people where this wasn't happening. No one, Lord, he's he's complaining to the Lord, right? Say no one, no one is arousing themselves to take hold of you. Lord, arousal is the key.

You see, because we're aroused by all manner of advertising, brothers and sisters, developing a hunger for more stuff and developing a dissatisfaction because we don't have it. You see, money, sex, power, more and more and more, there's no end to this warfare of more. It's the warfare of more and it causes you to feel I don't have enough.

That's what we're up against. Well, spiritual arousal, says Isaiah, is it's dull and non-existent in this people, a defeated people because they are a prayerless people. They are not waiting, they are not watching and they are not worshiping.

And yet they're the people of God. Go figure. They're not waiting.

They're not watching, they're not worshiping, they're not arousing themselves to take hold of him. You get that? I mean, it's just so beyond the book, you know, it's really, really taken hold of him. That's the spirit of this season and this is expecting, Lord, you've got to come down and do more.

And so he's speaking to us if we if we've been desensitized and fatigued, maybe, by the alluring power of the world and the flesh and the devil, those three little enemies there. Isaiah would say to us, actively wait, actively watch and actively worship. That's in the gospel reading today as well.

He's saying from ages past, no one has heard, no ear perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you who works for those who wait for him. What a picture of that. The creator of the universe works for us.

You just kind of think about that. Wait, I'm working for you, man. No, I'm going to work for you.

But you got to wait for me. How do you do that? What does that look like? What does that look like? That's going to be the key for Advent. Israel waited a long time before Jesus showed up.

That voice we're going to hear in the scriptures next week, a voice crying in the wilderness saying, prepare the way because the time has come, that Kairos moment has come. The kingdom of God is at hand. How long, oh, Lord, did that take? And they didn't wait very well.

The only reason we know that is because the scriptures tell us that, show us that. And the only reason the scriptures show us that is because we have the same problem, right? I do. I have a very hard time waiting on anything.

I mean, I want the fastest phone. I want the fastest computer. You know, I want the fastest car.

Maybe. I don't know. I don't know.

Better not do that. I'd use it, see if I had the fastest car. But I like fast stuff.

But when you get into kingdom time, Kairos time, which, by the way, we're right now redeeming and sanctifying the time in our worship this morning, it's a different kind of clock. It's a different kind of time. And so we have to enter into that kind of time in order to wait because waiting is a beautiful thing and it's a very active thing.

It's watching, it's discerning the times and discerning the spirit in the moment. The Zeitgeist, you know, the spirit of the age. And it's going like, no, no, no, no, that's not for me.

That's not from the Lord. I will not participate in that. You see, that's an alert posture or otherwise you'll get sucked into that and get sucked into that thing.

And all of a sudden you're all filthy and dirty because you've you've you know, you've messed up your consciences and you've lived in like not even like conscious sin. It just gets on you, gets on you. And the Lord wants to give us an alert posture where we can recognize the signs of the time, as Jesus is saying, that we can watch and wait.

How do we do that? How do we do that? Well, Isaiah is doing it by turning to God and he's crying out and he's telling God what's wrong as if he didn't know. But it's really good to to rehearse that with the Lord. He wants to hear you be responsive in saying this is happening and this is happening and this is happening, oh, Lord.

No one's praying, no, all of this is happening and all of this crazy stuff in the news that I'm reading every day. Wow, there's been some women waiting on justice, I hear. Wow, it's happening.

It's a beautiful thing when things get uncovered. Those women have been waiting a long time. With a lot of pain, with a lot of pain, now is their advent.

You know, I saw a video that that Liz sent me. She was stirred up to. To go and research this new museum, it's called the Louvre, but there's an there's Louvre number two and it's in Abu Dhabi and that's there in the Emirates, the Persian Gulf area there.

We heard about it through Candice, who's still with us this morning. Praise the Lord. And there's a reason.

You're good. You're in the will of God. You're in his time, right? Amen.

She's trying to get over to Dubai and we're praying for her visa to come in. Amen. We're going to pray for that this morning.

But you're in the timing of the Lord, so you don't have to worry. Amen. You can wait, watch and worship for the visa to come in the advent of your visa.

Amen. It showed the construction process of this beautiful, no expenses spared museum that was going up in the middle of the desert. You ought to check it out sometime, but, you know, you know, those videos that that sort of film the whole process from beginning to end, you know, it could take years.

This was like maybe a three year process. It was longer. How long did it take? Nine years to be built.

Oh, my gosh. Can you imagine nine years of building a facility and filming so much of that? I'm sure it wasn't 24 hours of nine years. That would be a lot of hard drive space to save that much video, right, Tom? But anyway, you know, I turned it on and it showed just this desert floor of sand.

Right. And then it's fast forwarding. Right.

It's doing nine years and it's going like, wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. I watched it in probably three minutes, about a three minute video. I saw nine years of construction happen.

And that's what we're being trained by. We don't want to wait nine years for that. We don't want to watch the real construction process.

We just want to fast forward it and speed it up. Right. And so we have to fight against that.

We have to fight against that thing. You know, it's like, you know, I love to watch, you know, flowers that have been videoed over the course of a season just slowly open up. And so from God's perspective, see, he sees all of that.

He can see us slowly. But surely. Opening up, but we're going, am I growing, am I getting anywhere, what's going on with me? You know, because we can't see what God sees.

We need a video of our growth and our lives in him to be fast forwarded so we can just get a glimpse of what's taking place in Kairos time. There's Kronos time in Greek and there's Kairos time in Greek. Right.

And kingdom time is Kairos time. It's a different way of walking through history. Right.

In the fullness of time, Kronos, God sent his son. That's Kronos. That's chronological time.

But when his son came on the scene in Mark chapter one and he said, the time is now the kingdom of God is at hand. He didn't use Kronos. He used Kairos for that word time.

Kingdom time where we can learn to wait on the Lord and gain new strength because he's not finished with us or the creation project yet. That's what Advent's all about. The in between that first coming and that longing of Israel and then that first coming of the Messiah Jesus into the earth, you know, and and we could look at Israel and say, how could you not recognize him? But that's there to show us that we might not recognize him either.

If we're going like this all the time, we have to slow down and come into that wait, watch and worship, or Jesus said, you may be asleep at the hour of my coming. And so slow down and learn how to wait on the Lord that is actively waited. It's not like this passivity.

It's very alert in baseball. You know, you've got those guys out there just kind of going. They don't do much until somebody slugs it out there.

Right. And then they're very important, but they're not just out there twiddling their thumbs during the game. Right.

And then they walk around and all of a sudden the batter comes up. The game depends on whether they get that fly ball. They can't be asleep, but they're not doing much except waiting, watching and going like, come on, come on, you know.

And that's a little bit of how our waiting and watching is. It feels like you're not doing much, but you're alert and you're listening as you're waiting and watch Isaiah's prayer has now been partially fulfilled, though, oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, you would tear open the heavens and come down. What's that a picture of? Can you think of a gospel story where the heavens were torn open, the baptism of Jesus? This is the partial fulfillment of rending the heavens and God coming down, except this time in the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

The sun is in the water. The father speaks from heaven, opening up those heavens and the Holy Spirit falls. All of a sudden we get a greater revelation of the Holy Trinity than Isaiah had right here.

He didn't see that. He didn't know that, but he's speaking beyond what he knows because he's a prophet. Right.

Oh, come on, tear open the heavens and come down. I will. That's the answer to Isaiah's prayer.

The baptism of Jesus. I would say the beginning of that answer would be the incarnation where God came down from heaven and became man. Oh, so beautiful.

God loves to come down because he can't go up. He's already as high as he can get. Amen.

He descends to us, his creation. God came down from heaven and became man. Divinity became one of us.

Heaven and earth were united in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God came down. The heavens were torn apart.

The full revelation of God's trinity was given. Heaven's open. Father speaks and sends the spirit in Jesus, fully God and fully human.

He reconciled heaven and earth, God and creation through the incarnation. He redeemed and sanctified creation. And now we're waiting on that final moment in great expectancy for him to come and wrap it all up in his final advent, his final coming.

We're living in between the first and the final coming. And so now, church, I think it's time to capture the spirit of the prophets who intercede. Says, I post watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem.

Give him no rest. Give him no rest on your walls of Jerusalem. Isaiah 62, 6. I have set watchmen.

This is how we watch. OK, it's through intercession, it's through prayer, it's through looking to him all the day and all the night. They shall never be silent.

They shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. See that tenacity that it takes God to do that.

And we are his representatives, a royal priesthood called to be priests. And what does the priest do? He's the one who prays and blesses things, right? And oversees creation. That was Adam's divine command as a priest of creation.

He was to oversee creation and bless it and give rule to it. And that's what we've been called to do. We've been called to restore what Adam lost.

And so the church is the joy of the whole earth, you see, because we are spiritual Zion. Hebrews 12 tells us and we join with heaven now in intercession. When you read through the book of Revelation, you just see so many, you know, little snapshots of what's going on in the heavenly realm, the unseen realm.

And it's all worship around the throne. Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb.

The saints are interceding and we're interceding because we believe in the communion of the saints and we're all in the spirit of Jesus Christ. We've been gathered up into him and we're all in unity, praying and rooting for the same thing. Oh, God, come, come.

You see, the last word of the New Testament is come. The last word of Revelation 22. It's a prayer.

Think about that. What did God want us to remember by the very last thing in the Holy Scripture? It's not an exhortation. It's a request.

It's a prayer. It says he who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming quickly. This is the Lord Jesus.

And then the response. Amen, come, Lord Jesus. And then here's the blessing, and I'm going to leave you with this.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Everybody say Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Amen. Amen. Let's stand together.

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