

December 5, 2021
Second Advent/Communion

Romans 8:18-25

“People Look East“

Fred Rogers study of child development gave him a deep grasp of human nature. Sometimes he would sing, *“I think its very very very hard to wait. Especially when you’re waiting for something very nice...I think it’s very very very hard to wait.”* If you have ever found it hard to wait – sing with me – *“I think its very very very hard to wait. Especially when you’re waiting for something very nice...I think it’s very very very hard to wait.”*

He really has us there – doesn’t he? Few are naturally patient. Some of us are more impatient than others. Recognizing how hard it is to wait is fair. What our focus hymn for today wants to do is ***transform that waiting from something sad to something hopeful.***

“People look East the time is near – for the crowning of the year – Make your house fair as you are able; trim the hearth and set the table. People look East, Love the guest is on the way.”

Last weeks hymn brought us to the depths of pondering and reflection. This week’s hymn is joyful – happy – and hopeful. Yes, we are waiting. Yes, we are waiting for something very nice – but the experience is a good one.

The author of this hymn chose a melody which is a Traditional French carol – and God bless her for doing so. The melody bounces and carries us along. Like last week there is a powerful confluence of text and tune which makes our experience singing it to be more than the sum of its parts.

The author of this hymn wrote children’s books and was considered shy. There isn’t anything shy about this hymn. It is a wonderful poetic exploration of the mystery of the incarnation. Love the *Guest*, Love the *rose*, Love the *bird*, Love the *star*, Love the *Lord*; all different manifestations of God among us – all whose essence is love. Waiting for God is not punishment but a gift.

In Paul’s letter to the church in Rome he takes on our difficulty with waiting. One day all of life will reflect what God wants. We do not live in such a world now – but the fix is in with the Resurrection of Jesus and redemption will one day be

everywhere. In the meantime, we are not there but know enough to want to be there – so we wait. While ordinary human nature finds waiting to be unsatisfying – Paul says we can handle the wait because we know what is coming. We can handle the wait because compared to what God is bringing about the wait is a piece of cake.

Peterson's translation which we heard today is marvelous. *Our joyful anticipation deepens over time, and we are enlarged by the waiting.* For those of us who are less than poster children for patience – how do we get there? We have been warned not to pray for patience because the only way to develop patience is to have challenges. But what if there is another way? What if the secret to finding our joy in waiting is to work the progression backwards? The progression for our impatience is often first, difficulty in waiting, followed by losing hope and finally forgetting what we were waiting for.

Our hymn and our text counsel us: *Remember what we are waiting for to renew our hope which can lead to joy in our waiting.*

Paul uses the imagery of pregnancy which I learned a long time ago – as a man – to avoid. It is too easy to get in trouble. So, let's return to our hymn. "People Look East" is the admonition *to expectantly look for what God is doing.* The Greek word in our text for "eager longing" is a compound word whose parts come together to mean "stretching the head". A marvelous picture of positive anticipation – a picture of something we only do when we live as people of hope – when we remember the good and right and glorious for which we wait.

We do not stretch our heads when we are afraid – we keep our heads down and sometimes bury them in the sand. Paul tells us today that God is happy when we look positively for what God will do. And we sing in Advent – People Look East – look hopefully for what God will do.

So when we find ourselves impatient...lets remember the good we are waiting for, the hope which grows in us and the joy which can be ours – even while waiting.

People look East – have courage

People look East – Let hope grow in you

People look East – for the one who is love is on the way.