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## *Waiting in the Meantime*

**A sermon by Canon Cathy Zappa**  
**Advent 2 – Year B**

In the season of Advent, we do a lot of waiting.

On one side, we're waiting for something we already know—for the unfolding of a story we cherish: God choosing to dwell among us. God coming in the flesh, in the vulnerable little baby Jesus, born in a manger, because there was no room for his poor parents in the inn. And we're waiting for all the comfort and hope and joy and peace that we've found in this story and in Christ's presence, already.

But on the other side, we're waiting for something we don't know yet, so we don't know what it will be like or when it will be: the second coming of Christ, in power and great glory to judge the living and the dead.

This talk of judgment may make some of us squeamish, because we've seen how the idea of the judgment of God can be manipulated to justify human judgments and prejudices—or to frighten people into church or some semblance of faith.

But it's actually supposed to be good news! It's the promise that, ultimately, God's will *will* be done, God's kingdom will come, there will be peace and justice on earth, and we will know Christ's power working in us and in our world in a way that's greater than anything we've seen yet. And judgment is part of God's mercy: it is God's desire, God's plea, for us to stop destroying ourselves.

This is where we spend most of our lives: in this in-between time that Advent makes plain: between the hope and promise of Christ's first coming, and the hope and promise of his second coming.

This is where many of us find ourselves spiritually too, more often than not: in the long wait between the last time we heard from God, or felt inspired, or chosen, or loved, or sure of God's presence—and the next time, which we desperately needed *yesterday*. So we pray, and plead and wait for God to show up again, in power and great glory—to save someone we love, to help us through some difficult time, to bring us back to life, to revive our faith.

This is the kind of waiting that Peter's talking about in our Epistle this morning. He's speaking to some of the earliest Christians, just a generation after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

Just like us, they've been changed forever by Christ's first coming. And just like us, they know that there's more to come still—that his work in this world and in themselves is not yet finished.

So they wait, and wait, and wait, for his return, which they expect to happen any day, and definitely during their lifetime. And thirty years go by, and there's still no sign of him. And people are starting to laugh at them for their scoffing at them for their faith and hope in him.

So they start to wonder, how much longer? Is he coming at all? Have we just been kidding ourselves? Should we just give up?

No, Peter says, in so many words. Don't give up, because it's in the waiting that you learn what faith really is and grow into

the people you're called to be!

But how, they want to know—we want to know—how do we wait, when it's so long and hard and scary? Fortunately, Peter has some suggestions for how we can go about the waiting.

First, he says, remember. Remember what you know already. Remember that Christ is with you, already. Remember what you have known and experienced of him already. Remember the ways he has been there for you before and gotten you through things that you never thought you could survive. Remember that his words are trustworthy and true, so if he says he's coming back, he means it.

Second, Peter urges, prepare! Prepare, not by taking extreme measures to shore ourselves up against some kind of future disaster, but by doing the work that is in front of you today. Prepare, by practicing living into your convictions, practicing being the people you're called to be, practicing being faithful.

Rituals can be a life-line here: they help us show up for prayer and worship and relationship, even when we don't feel like it. They help us do faith, even when we don't understand it. They help us stay present, until the love or mystery or inspiration returns, and we find that something in us, or between us, has been changed—that our faith, or relationship, or love, or calling has grown deeper.

Third, Peter says, along with John the Baptist and a host of others: Repent! Return! God doesn't want any to perish, not a one, but all to come to repentance. So return to the sort of persons you ought to be, in leading lives of holiness and godliness. Return to this life and to your responsibility in it—because you don't have forever, and what you do on this day matters. A lot.

And most important, return to God. Because as much as we may lament our long waiting, Peter reminds us that God is waiting, too, and has been waiting for far longer than we can imagine. God has been waiting for us to wake up and return. So while we may be wondering whether God will be faithful, whether Christ will show up and be true to his promises, perhaps the better question is, will we?