

**Sermon Notes of
Guest Speaker Michelle Fleming's Sermon on December 3, 2017
First Sunday of Advent – Hope**

"Expectant Waiting - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9"

[In today's sermon (First Sunday of Advent), "Expectant Waiting - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9", guest speaker Michele Fleming shows that during Advent we not only celebrate Jesus' first coming but we should also anticipate with hope His return to establish the fullness of God's kingdom.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Today's message is based on this Scripture.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (ESV), Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4) I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5) that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge – 6) even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you – 7) so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8) who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9) God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Opening prayer

Advent:

- We are beginning to celebrate Advent, which is a time of celebration and anticipation.
- Throughout the upcoming weeks we will have much to celebrate and much to anticipate during the Christmas season.
- We will have extra time with family and friends, gifts under the tree, and the promise of a fresh start with the upcoming New Year.
- From a liturgical and spiritual perspective, Advent is a celebration of three things:
 - We are celebrating Jesus' first coming, fulfilling the Father's eternal covenant of drawing humanity to Himself.
 - We are also celebrating His present coming. We are not waiting alone – through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is dwelling in us to give us the strength and courage that we need to walk through this life.
 - It's also a time of the anticipation and longing for the ultimate return of Jesus to establish God's Kingdom, where there will be no more tears, no more sorrow and all things will become right in this world.
- Advent is a time of waiting with expectation for Christ's return.
- There are different ways we can wait – we can wait in a worry-full way or a hopeful way.
- The hope of Advent is that Christ will come again.

- Karl Barth says it this way:

“Unfulfilled and fulfilled promise are related to each other, as are dawn and sunrise. Both are promise and in fact the same promise. If anywhere at all, then it is precisely in the light of the coming of Christ that faith has become Advent faith, the expectation of future revelation. But faith knows for whom and for what it is waiting. It is fulfilled faith because it lays hold on the fulfilled promise.”

The advantage of waiting:

- The rush toward Christmas celebrations can cause us to overlook the great spiritual advantage of waiting.
- In our results-driven culture, waiting is not given much value. In fact, waiting is often seen as a negative.
- We tend to believe that the product is of far greater importance than the process.
- But in God’s economy, waiting is of great value, for it helps us understand where our hope lies.
- Now we were made to be satisfied by God and God alone.
- But, since the Garden of Eden, we are always looking elsewhere for our satisfaction.
- Whether it is based on our own success (by the gifts God gave us in the first place), or on acceptance from other people, or even something like food that can give us physical comfort.
- And so Advent is a reminder to ourselves that nothing can fill the holes that we have in our lives except God Himself.
- But, as humans, our own agenda has become so crucial to us.
- We need to realize how much of our identity lies within our own efficiency.

What is our response to waiting?

- For Michelle any time she has to wait in a long line at the grocery store or in traffic on the freeways, she becomes immediately agitated, thinking of all the better things she could be doing with this time.
- But it should be a wakeup call that she is far too often at the center of her own kingdom.
- Waiting should be a reminder for all of us to surrender to the Prince of Peace and to have an opportunity to rest in Him.

How are we going to wait in this Advent season?

- What is our immediate internal reaction?
 - Is it peace and patience?
 - Or is it anxiety and frustration?
- Where did we put our hope in the process?
 - Do we put our hope back in ourselves?
 - Or do we surrender ourselves to God?
- What does this waiting process teach us about ourselves and about who God is?
 - Waiting teaches us about God’s sovereignty and that He is working for our good.
 - It’s not a hopeless waiting.

- It's a wait where we know for whom we are waiting for.
- We should be standing on-the-tip-of-our-toes, excitedly and expectantly waiting for Him to work for our good.
- When Jesus first came, He came to redeem our lives.
- Jesus knows us thoroughly – He knows our life with all of its brokenness and with all of its breakthroughs, as well.

- We should never outgrow God's invitation to wait on Him – the learning curve of waiting is lifelong process.
- So, Advent is the season to keep learning and practicing the discipline of waiting that challenges us all.
- It's an opportunity to see the good fruit that waiting with patience and in hope produces in our lives.

Church at Corinth:

- So now what does Paul's letter to the Corinthians have to do with the Advent season?
- The whole reason for choosing these verses is that the Corinthians were waiting poorly.
- They had the hope of Jesus, but they were building their own little kingdom.
- So Paul wrote this letter to encourage and remind them that in Jesus they already have every good thing that they need.

- Now, let's look at the cultural context of Corinth.
- Corinth was located on an isthmus and was a port city.
- It was once financially successful and then things came crashing down.

- But now it's going through a rebuilding process where there became a growing divide between the rich and the poor.
- And self-promotion and pride then become a huge part of the culture there, as well as wild living.
- One commentary said Corinth was like New York, Los Angeles and Las Vegas all wrapped into one town.

- Paul and Apollos had founded the church, but were no longer there.
- Priscilla and Aquila were in Corinth as the disciples of Paul.
- In Ephesus, Paul hears about problems there in Corinth from a letter from Chloe and her household.

- The Corinthians were quarrelling and squabbling about building their own little kingdoms – they were not putting their hope into God's kingdom.
- They were competing with one another for their own spiritual success.
- So, Paul wrote them this letter showing them that they were denying the rich life in Jesus that they already had.

- All of us have to participate with Jesus in building His kingdom, rather than trying to build our own little kingdom.
- So let's read these verses again as an encouragement reminding us that we have every blessing in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1: 3 – 9 (ESV):

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge – even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you – so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

How can we wait well?

- We need to think about where we are placing our hope.
- We need to be living out of the reality that we are waiting hopefully but that we are not waiting alone.
- One reason why we are waiting for a Second Coming is that Scripture tells us Jesus is returning in the “fullness of His time.”
- Now while we’re waiting, we have the privilege to participate in helping to prepare the way and also we are participating in helping build the ultimate kingdom.
- The Christian author Henri Nouwen calls our waiting “active waiting.”

“Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it.”

Conclusion:

- So how can we actively wait?
- We need to prayerfully consider how we are being called to actively and expectantly wait during this Advent season.
- Here are some ideas of how to do that.
 - Bring reconciliation – to people we are having difficulties with by telling them that we are sorry and be the first one to apologize.
 - Ask questions and listen to someone who has different life experiences than us or who has a different world view than we do.
 - Rest in the abundance of who God is and bless someone with limited time, health, or financial resources and meet a need they have this Christmas season.

Responsive Reading:

- We come together in church to remind ourselves of who God is and to declare truths together about how He is working in our lives.
- So, let’s stand and as a symbol of our active waiting, let’s declare these words of hope together:

Leader: O Lord, stir our hearts as we prepare for the coming of Your one and only Son.

People: We wait.
We wait with expectant hope.

In a world that often seems hopeless,
we wait in anticipation of the hope only you can bring.

Leader: From ages past, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you who works for those who wait for him.

People: We wait in expectant hope. Come, long expected Jesus.

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land as dark as death a light has dawned.

People: O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son. May Christ our Savior bring light into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. We ask this through the hope we have in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Communion:

- Communion represents the hope we've been talking about today – the hope we have in Jesus in His life, His death and His resurrection.
- Prayer over the elements of Communion:

God we thank you that You are our Rescuer, Redeemer and Restorer. We thank you Jesus for being our Prince of Peace.

We come together today to celebrate Communion, as you told us to do, as a reminder that you have done everything for us and thus we have this overwhelming abundant gift of grace. It's a joy to receive it.

We thank you and praise You for who you are and for all that you do for us. We pray these things in your name. Amen!

- This is from Luke 2:5-14 (Contemporary English Version):

Mary was engaged to Joseph and traveled with him to Bethlehem. She was soon to have a baby. And while they were there, she gave birth to her first-born son. She dressed him in baby clothes and laid him on a bed of hay because there was no room for them in the inn.

That night in the fields near Bethlehem, some shepherds were guarding their sheep. All at once an angel came down to them from the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord's glory flashed around them. The shepherds were frightened. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, which will make everyone happy.

This very day in King David's hometown a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay."

- So, at Christmas, we see Jesus' humanity in the manger and we also see His divinity in what the angel said.
- So, just as the Word was from the beginning, so was the plan of God.
- His sacrifice was planned before time was.
- We see His humanity in the Garden of Gethsemane and His divinity on the cross.
- Let's remember that the baby in the manger came for a purpose, so that we might be redeemed.

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: "Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God."

- So, let's come to the table with joy in our heart.