

You really don't know a person until you've seen them wait. Then you learn quite a bit. Every day we see things like: impatient drivers tailgating, shoppers with very loud whispers complaining about the person who needs a price check, the list goes on. When waiting is a matter of life or death, even more comes to the surface. Right now the world waits on pins and needles for vaccines to arrive. Suffice it to say that human beings are not fans of waiting. But, if we let ourselves reflect, we may grudgingly admit that—at times—it was good for us to wait. That's a turn that the Bible invites you to make, and to push that a little further, Biblical faith recommends that you embrace waiting, when what you're waiting for is the return of Jesus.

Today you heard Jesus tell a story about a man who goes on a journey. He doesn't tell his servants where he is going or when he will come home again. He leaves his servants in charge of his home and property and gives them work to do while he is away. He then leaves and his last word to his servants as he closes the front door is to be diligent and ready for his return, whenever that might be.

This is not unlike parents who leave their son or daughter at home to look after the house, giving them instructions on what to do. When mom and dad have finally gone, there is that wonderful feeling of freedom. The whole house is yours. You can eat what you want, drink what you want, leave your clothes lying all over the place, you can stay up as late as you like and sleep in till lunchtime.

However, if the parents are away for a long time and the un-watered plants are looking very sad, all the food has been cleaned out of the cupboards, no more dishes will fit in the sink, and you have run out of clean underwear, the time has come to make a decision. If the mess doesn't bother you and you don't care what mom and dad will say, then you have no worries.

Conversely if you take seriously the instructions that were given, then you will do your best to carry them out. After all, they could come home at any time. It would be too late to get busy - make beds, wash dishes, sweep floors and start a load of laundry - when the car pulls into the driveway. It would even be worse if you woke up in the middle of the night to find your parents standing at the foot of your bed catching you totally unprepared with the house in a mess.

Jesus' parable tells us to wait, while at the same time reminding us that we have jobs to do while he is away. We are in the time between Jesus' first and second comings and Jesus has told us simply: do the work. What work is that? It's work driven by kingdom values: doing unto others as he did unto us; feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the vulnerable, all of it keeping the house in order. It's not boring waiting. It's active waiting that He is looking for.

Now, you can choose to wait passively, like sitting in a waiting room at the doctor's, scrolling through your smartphone, daydreaming a bit, just killing time until you're called into the exam room. Passive waiting doesn't require much energy or attention or commitment. If God wants us, he is all-knowing and he knows where to find us. In the meantime, we deal with our own

concerns, and set our own agendas. Prayer, worship, mission, the Bible, deliberately living the Christian life, there'll be time for all of that later. Until there isn't.

Let me say it like this. If you believe that Jesus will keep his word and come again, then right now, please examine just how active you have been while waiting.

The work of the kingdom has been entrusted to you and me. Our Master expects us to be faithful. Like the parents who trust their teenager to look after the house while they are away, Jesus trusts you and me to live out His values until he returns.

As I mentioned before, Biblical faith invites you to embrace waiting for Jesus as a lifestyle of active service. The end of one liturgical church year and the beginning of another blend the theme of waiting in a variety of ways. Right now we are waiting for the return of Jesus the King. Long ago, God's people waited for his first arrival. Of course, we're waiting for event of Christmas. We use the word Advent to remind us that all of this activity and busy-ness signals an arrival; the arrival of a Person. And with the arrival of that Person, something new begins. At the Advent of this person, you will want to have your lamp trimmed and burning. At the Advent of this person you will want to have his house in order. But please do not do this work out of sense of fear—do it because you love the one who is returning and you want to please him, because your respect and adoration for Him is off the charts.

That love, respect, and admiration skyrockets when you realize what He has done for you.

The Advent of Jesus happened in the first place because humanity needed something. And it was not another good example to follow. There were plenty of those. Humanity did not need another Lawgiver, there were plenty of those too. The situation was much, much worse. Humanity needed to be redeemed and rescued. Humanity needed to be purchased, cleaned up, and restored. It was either that or a downward spiral into self-destruction—a self-imposed exile from goodness and God. Someone in a position to help would have to show up and help. Jesus showed up. We remember that at Advent. We also are rehearsing that at Advent.

When Jesus showed up, he showed up to make a ransom payment. Jesus came to acquire you and me and all people held in captivity by sin and darkness. The ransom price was high. Jesus became the prisoner to let us go free. Does this exchange register with you? His life for yours—that's what happened. His crucifixion and resurrection for us; that was the result of the first Advent.

But why? Why did he do it? Why go through with it? To use the language of the parable, when the Master of the House returns, He wants you to be there. That's why. When Jesus returns in glory he wants to find you. He wants to see you waiting for him. Actively. Expectantly. With the arrival of that person something new begins. Aren't you ready for that?