

How often have you wished you could know for certain what tomorrow would bring? Wouldn't your waiting be easier if you knew? How life would change if we could predict the future!

Some have used tea leaves or tarot cards to make money off people's eagerness to see tomorrow. Others trust horoscopes or a wise and trusted advisor. Ancient people cut open animals to "divine" the future or looked at the alignment of the planets. Native Americans would fast in the wilderness until they hallucinated and believed those visions predicted their future.

We look at weather apps to see what tomorrow will bring. We use our computers to predict the stock market or who will win the World Series. *Everyone seems anxious to know future ... as if that would make it easier!* How often have you wished you could know for certain what comes next?

Advent is upon us and helps us remember what our future is all about. As we begin a new year in the life of the Church, we stop to look forward and prepare to celebrate the birth which has made every life different forever. Jesus' words are clear: *"Be on guard! Stay awake!"*

The confusion of Mark's world was no different than ours. Christians feared the destruction of Jerusalem, the loss of temple, a Roman invasion. They wondered "is this what God had promised?" They thought they were waiting for the second coming of Jesus, and instead they faced more persecution and pain. In that moment, Mark shared the Good News of Jesus, and shared words that Jesus has said only 10 or 20 years earlier.

Mark's call to us today is the same as 2000 years ago. *"You prepare for Christ by how you live today, no matter what today brings."* Think about what the means, and how change how we act as parents or how we approached our jobs or free time. No matter what is going on around us, God's love, promise, and power never change! So, what are we waiting for? How do we wait?

Do we remember God? Are we looking for God? Or are we simply counting shopping days until Christmas? Or is this week like every other; some good stuff, some bad stuff and probably not as much God stuff as we know would be right?

In these four weeks of Advent, we are reminded that we DO know the future. It is full of forgiving love and the promise that we will never be abandoned and will live with God forever! With such a powerful gift, our daily journey has a new perspective and a joyful purpose. As our readings focus on Jesus coming as a baby, or in our daily lives, or at the last day, we remember most importantly that Jesus will come, to all. Many find such waiting uncomfortable, and we hear the

same cries, complaints, or the fears that God isn't listening, watching, or paying attention.

Isaiah 64 relates a beautiful image of our waiting and God's. He writes: "*O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.*" Even while our imperfect waiting is underway, God is slowly and patiently molding, holding, and shaping our lives like a potter working to turn lumps of clay into something beautiful and useful. I am certain the Genesis account of God shaping clay into a man, and breathing life into it was the inspiration of that text, but what a beautiful gift that is for our Advent wait.

Advent is about waiting. Taking time. Being patient. Looking to see what God is doing, to better see and celebrate the greatest gift ever given with the miracle at Bethlehem. But this is a wait that doesn't just end on Christmas morning but continues throughout our earthly journey. And Advent offers a refresher course for the faithful to remember how to wait.

Martin Luther was once asked, "If you knew that tomorrow was your last day on earth, what would you do today?" His simple answer was, "*Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.*" While we are tempted to worry about tomorrow, he understood Jesus' call to live each day fully – plant a tree, love your children, be good stewards in our vocation, feed a hungry stranger, or comfort a lonely neighbor.

So, do you need to read the signs? Does anyone need tea leaves or tarot cards? Is there a need for us to control tomorrow or simply find more joyful ways to share our servant love today? It's not about waiting for a crystal ball to drop, but to celebrate a baby in a manger!

Remembering how we waited for a child to be born, then start school, and then move into life as an adult, we realize those years were filled with active waiting. With shaping, molding, planting, reshaping, remolding, seeking for those efforts to be guided by the unseen hands of a loving God. Such a blessing life becomes, in the hands of a loving potter, as lumps of clay become beautiful and useful gifts!

The pain in broken relationships is the pain we call sin. And while we don't know what will happen next, we are reminded that Christ can heal what we cannot. The blind will see, the lame will walk, the dead will rise, and Christ will come again, as he comes daily in grace, mercy, and peace!

We all know Christmas is coming, but there is more to life than just this moment in time. An ancient rabbi wrote, "*There was a young man, moving about the land to find work. He saw an old man planting an olive tree. "Grandfather," he called out, "why are you planting that tree? It won't bear fruit for many years." "All the more reason to plant now," replied the old man.*"

No matter what is going on around us, God's love, promise, and power never change! So, what are we waiting for? Do we remember God? Are we looking for God? Or are we simply counting shopping days until Christmas? Or is this week like every other; some good stuff, some bad stuff and probably not as much God stuff as we know would be right? The time to prepare for tomorrow is now.

What better time than now to remember what our waiting is all about? It begins with reading the signs. Not in newspapers, internet, or Twitter but in the manger, cross, and empty tomb. And not just so that we prepare for Christmas, but that we prepare for the rest of our lives. Advent offers annual creative reflection (like an artist waiting to be inspired) and then we hear GOOD NEWS. Faithful waiting is not passive, it is full of the joy, love, and peace which Christmas brings!