

Watch and Wait
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Why the Lectionary?

Revised Common Lectionary slide:

- Major parts of the Bible, organized into daily readings: OT reading, Psalm or other Bible song, NT reading, and a Gospel reading.
- Three cycles called Year A, B, and C. 2019: Year A
- Guides us through the Liturgical year, which begins today, on the First Sunday of Advent. Advent prepares us for Incarnation. Lent prepares us for Resurrection. God entering life, God bringing new life out of death.

Why I love it sometimes

- Helps us hear the broader testimony of Scripture instead of hearing a smaller set of texts over and over. It helps us hold the Big God Story, and see ourselves in it.
 - “When we submit our lives to what we read in Scripture, we find that we are not being led to see God in our stories but our stories in God’s. God is the larger context and plot in which our stories find themselves.” – Eugene Peterson
- Texts “talk to each other” and, by the Holy Spirit, speak to us in deeper ways.
- It reminds us that there is more than one way to measure time.
 - In secular time, we are only pushing to move forward – to meet our deadlines and our quotas, to make through the work week so we can enjoy the weekend, looking forward to next vacation trip or fun activity. Secular time wants us to believe it’s all about onward and upward, bigger and better – and we want to believe that.
 - In liturgical time, we reconnect with the cyclical nature of things – the movement from one seasons to another; the cycle of birth, growth, death, and rebirth; the importance of retelling, remembering, and relearning as the path to growth.

- The lectionary helps us discern patterns and recurring themes in Scripture. **Rhythms transform us -- especially rhythms that remind us that we can begin again.**
- **As you hear these texts together, what themes do you notice? What feelings or longings come up for you?**

Why Judgement?

One of the themes that run through these texts is judgement.

Isaiah promises us a future in which God's good and right judgement ends conflict among the nations. The Psalm urges us to pray for the City of Peace where the thrones of judgement have been set up. The Apostle Paul reminds us that it's not time to *get ready*, but to *be ready* because the day of our salvation is near and, as Jesus teaches, it will come at an unexpected hour.

Judgement is not one of those words that conjures up warm and fuzzy feeling. On the contrary, Jesus' description sounds more like a warning than good news. But if we think about Judgement the way Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul thought about it, then we understand judgement to be the twin pole to Creation.

In the beginning God *creates the world*, and there will eventually come a day when God will *put the world right*. We are being invited to imagine a world in which all things will be known, all things will be forgiven, and all things will be set right. There will be a day when we can let out a collective sigh of relief and start over.

To know that such a day WILL come to pass gives us hope. The universe does make sense, after all. We can know that the riddles of life and death, guilt and grief will not go unsolved. And we can celebrate that it is God – the one who created it all in Love and who sent the Son into the world to make that love specific and accessible – who will be making things as they should be.

Jesus calls that day “the coming of the Son of Man.”

We often call this the Second coming of Christ, though it would better to speak of it as the third. As the first chapter of John's gospel makes plain, Christ was first revealed in creation, then a second time in person of Jesus. Now we await the full and final appearing of the Resurrected Christ and the completion of God's good judgement work.

What Jesus makes abundantly clear is that no one knows WHEN that day will come except God the Father. The angels gathered around God's judgement seat don't know. Not even the Son knows. "Disciples are called to follow their Lord in a certain eschatological agnosticism, not knowing when the end will occur" (Bruner 522), which is just a fancy way of saying, "If Jesus doesn't need to know the timing, then neither do you."

What we do need to know is that it WILL happen, and Jesus wants us to live as if it will be happening any minute. We are to watch, and wait, and above all we are to stay awake. We are to be a ready people, always on the alert and always about Kingdom business. As we prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew this Christmas, let us live like Jesus, love like Jesus, and serve the world Jesus gave his life to save.

We begin again where it started, around the Lord's Table.

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