

**A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic**

**Second Sunday of Advent, December 6, 2020**

**Learning How to Wait**

by Garland F. Pierce

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

40:1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.  
  
40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.  
  
40:3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
  
40:4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.  
  
40:5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."  
  
40:6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.  
  
40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.  
  
40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.  
  
40:9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"  
  
40:10 See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.  
  
40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

The mother and son sat waiting. He had spent so much time in St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. It seemed like all of his young life had been spent there. Now they had to wait to find out if the treatments had worked, if all the side effects had been worth it after all. While they waited, the mother bravely talked to him about the possible scenarios regarding his health and how they might proceed. She had taken careful notes when the doctors had shared the information with her; now she repeated what she had learned in language that her young son could understand. She said, “Baby, while we wait, just know that no matter what, I will be with you!” The son said, “Mom, it’s not so bad—the waiting—because you are here. All this time that I have been sick, you have been teaching me how to wait.”

This year has brought many challenges and losses, much pain and suffering, a plethora of questions, and new ways of doing and being. We have had to wait. The wait for a vaccine as well as the wait for things to go back to normal has seemed so long. Many have grown weary of waiting and have let their guards down, becoming lax in following the recommended health precautions. And then we come to Advent, yet another time of waiting! Can’t we just get to Christmas and 2021 already so that 2020 can be behind us?

The Isaiah passage seems to understand the anxiousness involved in loss and having to wait for change or a breakthrough. Judah has been in exile and now it looks like the exile will soon be over. The prophet speaks words of comfort to a waiting people, “Comfort, my people says your God.” The worse is behind you. Your God is with you. You are limited like grass; but, your God has no limits. This same God shall bring in a new realm—with valleys exalted and rough places made plain. This same God will be your shepherd and you, the sheep. You shall be drawn into safety—the shepherd’s bosom. So wait in comfort and peace. Yours shall be an active waiting; one in which you declare boldly and with strength of God’s power and goodness. Yours shall be an active waiting; one in which you live courageously and peacefully as if God’s realm for which you wait is already here. In Advent waiting, we live like the first is already last and the last first. We wait and witness. We wait and work. The vaccine is almost here so we work to ensure that all have access to it. Immanuel is coming and is already here, so we live like Christ is looking and we live as he has instructed us to do.

Advent teaches us how to wait!

**TALK:** Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture and on the questions: For what do I wait this Advent? How will I wait?

**PRAY:**

Caring God,

We sometimes get bogged down by the weight of the world, by the difficulties and struggles that we encounter in life. Sometimes we try to carry it on our own, but we can’t. We pray that we will turn to you, and that we may seek and find comfort in you alone. We ask that you help us to be renewed by you and know you more, even as we wait. In the name of Immanuel, we pray, AMEN

Adapted from: <https://calvin.edu/dotAsset/e8f62511-6b99-4d20-8769-68fe8ab1945d>

**ACT:**

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, make an Advent action plan as to how you will wait this Advent—for what, who with, and how? While we wait, do what you can, help others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Check out some other Advent Resources for worship and study:

AMEC Publishing House (Sunday School Union). <http://www.iamame.org/worship-resources-2/>

Advent Daily Devotional from the AME, AMEZ, and CME Departments of Christian Education (Kindle version): <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08M6FGLHC?pf_rd_r=VVMNB09AMKMDNH1EDGJS&pf_rd_p=40eb7df6-3345-4945-93b1-96c5bd9a116d>

**Song:**

Jesus, Great Shepherd of the Sheep

AMEC Hymnal, #312

1. Je-sus, great Shep-herd of the sheep,

To Thee for help we fly;

Thy lit-tle flock in safe-ty keep,

For O, the wolf is nigh!

1. He comes, of hel-lish mal-ice full,

To scat-ter, tear, and slay;

He sei-zes ev-ery strug-gling soul

As his own law-ful prey.

1. Us in-to Thy pro-tec-tion take,

And gath-er with Thine arm;

Un-less the fold we first for-sake,

The wolf can nev-er harm.

1. We laugh to scorn his cru-el power

While by our Shep-herd’s side;

The sheep he nev-er can de-vour

Un-less he first di-vide.

1. O do not suf-fer him to part

The souls that here a-gree;

But make us of one mind and heart,

And keep us one in Thee.

1. To-geth-er let us sweet-ly live,

To-geth-er let us die,

And each a star-ry crown re-ceive,

And reign a-bove the sky. A-men.

Alternative Song: Comfort Ye My People from Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration with Daryl Coley and Vanessa Bell Armstrong: <https://youtu.be/hKuIT9LOB8A>

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.

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*The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.*