



What Can't Wait?

Mid-Week Advent Worship



Lauren Wright Pittman

First Week in Advent

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

God's Promised Day (Hope) Can't Wait

Prelude

Advent is a season of waiting, but is idle waiting what God wants of us? In preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together—what things can't wait? What demands our immediate attention? What requires our work and preparation? What is it that God can't wait for? Is it our praise, reconciliation, and proclamation? Is it the end of suffering, isolation, and fear? This Advent, we invite you to join us in imagining, prioritizing, and preparing. As we wait, what can't?

Introduction Video

Call to Worship/Candle Lighting

As the litany, below, is read you are welcome to light a candle to prepare your hearts and minds for worship

I will wait for coffee to brew. / I will wait for traffic to clear.
I will wait for fruit to ripen. / I will wait for flowers to grow.
I will wait for seasons to change. / I will wait for the sun to rise.
I will wait for you to say sorry. / I will wait for the doctor to call.
I will wait for the weekend to arrive. / I will wait for my baby's first words.
I will wait for Christmas to arrive.
I will wait for a lot of things, but I will not wait for hope.
I cannot wait for hope, because I want to live with hope—
today and every day.

I want to roll my sleeves up and get to work—living, serving, giving, and transforming with the hope of a better day.

So today we light the candle of hope as a reminder and as a prayer that we might stop waiting and start living, stop watching and start moving.

May the light of this candle burn inside us this week—inspiring hope and action for God's promised day. Amen.

Song

All Earth is Hopeful

Red ELW 266 vv. 1,2,3

**All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**

**People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us," our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**

**Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**

Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, You paint a picture of a better world— A world of peace and joy, of equality and grace. But we turn our heads and close our eyes, Afraid that you might want us to help. You ask us to be brave, and we are complacent. You ask us to speak out, but instead we stay quiet. You ask us to listen, and we assume we are the experts. You lead with love, and we wait on the sidelines. Forgive us for always being ten steps behind you. Forgive us for all the ways we are works in progress. Fill our hearts with a hope that won't let go. Gratefully we pray, Amen

Scripture Reading

Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in [\[Q\]](#) hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes [\[Q\]](#) for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Hope Video

Poem

God's Promised Day (Hope) Can't Wait

created by: Sarah Are

Someone once told me that hope was naive—
A foolish game that children play
When they pray that summer won't end,
And bedtime won't come.

Someone once told me that hope was naive as they
Cradled pessimism in their lap like a sleeping cat,
Stroking their ego while they stoked a fire within me.

Unfortunately for them, I'm allergic to cats.
And unfortunately for them, those who deny hope
Will never know vulnerability;

For hope requires us to believe in a better day—
Even when this one is falling apart.
Hope looks the 24-hour news cycle in the face,
Hope looks our broken relationships in the face,

Hope looks our low self-esteem in the face,
And declares at low tide that the water will return.
Hope is exhaling, trusting that your body will inhale again.
Hope is watching the sunset and setting an alarm.
Hope is planting seeds in the winter, assuming summer will come.

I never said it would be easy.
The ground is frozen, you are thirsty,
and the night is long.

But I will say this—
I have found hope to be the rhythm of love and the fiber of faith;
For to hope is to believe in God's ability to bring about a better day,
And like a child with an Advent calendar,
I will always be counting down the days.
So to those who cradle pessimism and fear, You can find me outside—with the
kids—wishing on stars,
Praying to the God of today That tomorrow will be just as beautiful.
Set your alarm.
We'd like for you to join us.
The sunrise won't wait.

Song

Come and Set Us Free

Refrain

***Come, come, Lord Jesus
Come, come save your people.
Come and set us free.***

Awaken our hearts to the pow'r of your love.

Awaken our hearts to your mercy.

Free us, O Lord, from the power of sin. Set us free *Refrain*

Awaken our hearts to the pow'r of your truth.

Awaken our hearts to your justice.

Teach us and guide us for you are the way. Set us free *Refrain*

Awaken our hearts to your holy ways.

Awaken our hearts to forgiveness.

Lead us O Lord, to the light of your truth. Set us free. *Refrain*

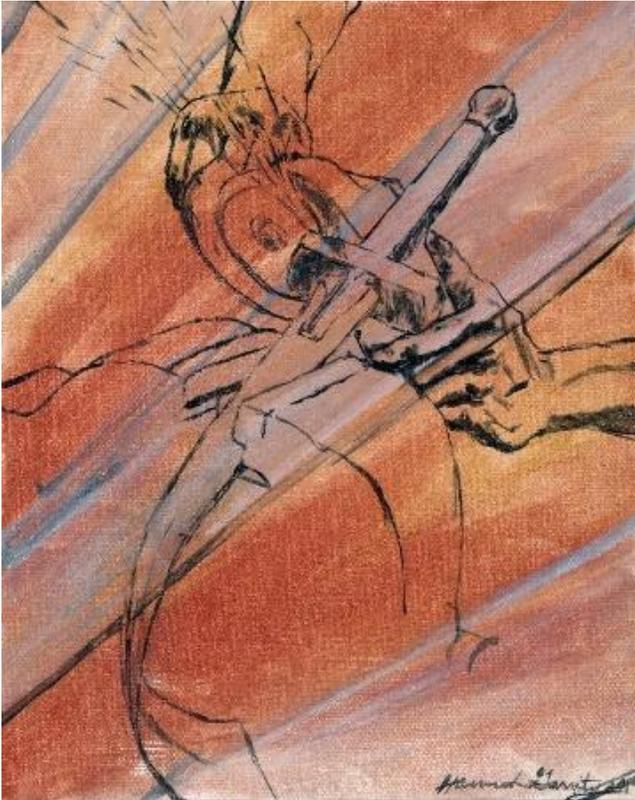
Sending

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait. **Amen.**

Go in peace. Christ is near. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

FROM THE ARTIST | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN



“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...” These musical attributes wash over us each Christmas season. Why aren’t we more familiar with the imagery at the beginning of this passage? It is imagery from a prophet speaking to a people defeated, oppressed, and living in the shadow of Assyria’s military might—a “land of deep darkness” (Is. 9:2). It is a bold, particular, contextual hope punctuated by broken yokes, splintered rods, and burning materials of war. The boots and garments of warriors are burned as fuel. These violent elements are set ablaze and physically transformed into warmth, light, and fuel for justice. I think this text calls for action and a shift in our identity. We are no longer to be defined by violence. We are called to be people who make peace—those who tear down systems of oppression. We are to transform the things of

war into light. What exists in your world that needs to be set on fire? What darkness, violence, or negative energy can you transfer into fuel for peace? In this drawing, light radiates from the broken ends of the rod which previously weighed down this woman’s shoulders. The fleeting darkness of violence encircles this first mandorla of light, but the flames which consume the weapons of war cannot be contained by the darkness. In traditional Christian art, the mandorla, or a pointed oval, usually frames the entire body of Christ. In this instance, the mandorla frames the inbreaking of light—the point at which oppressive substance is destroyed. This is an image of Christ breaking into the world—Christ lives and breathes through our participation in dismantling injustice. This image stands parallel to the familiar image of a child born with authority resting on his shoulders—the Prince of Peace. We need to hold these images together in tension and in harmony to find the gravity of this prophecy and our role in it.