

GOSPEL MESSAGE

November 28, 2021

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Expectant Waiting

A pastor once summarized the way God answers prayers with three categories: yes, no, and not yet. To his young audience, these categories made sense and served as a simple way to think about their prayer life. But having clear categories does not dismiss the fact that it is often easier to receive the answer “yes” or “no,” compared to the answer “not yet.” After all, the answer “not yet” often involves waiting. And waiting can be exhausting!

Whether it be waiting for a medical diagnosis, longing for healing in a relationship, expecting a child, or enduring another situation beyond our complete control, it can be challenging to be patient, accept the unknown, and trust God’s promises in the meantime.

This is a reality Jesus understood, and one that is at the heart of his parable of the fig tree in today’s reading. The early believers needed encouragement as they waited for the coming of the Lord. Patience, endurance, and trust did not come any easier to them than they do to many of us today. Yet that is precisely what followers of Christ are invited to do during the season of Advent: to remain prayerful and expectant as they await the birth of Jesus.

Perhaps that is why Jesus gives his followers something to do in their waiting. Jesus’ words urge us to be on the lookout for signs of God’s kingdom, even as we await the fulfillment of God’s promises in the future. The sign you see may be a neighbor helping another in need, a child growing and thriving, or a card received from a friend. God’s promise is that even as we wait for the fulfillment of God’s kingdom, it is drawing near—and is, in fact, already among us.

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