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## **“Waiting for God”**

**A sermon by Sam R. Miglarese**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent: Lessons & Carols  
December 19, 2010**

**Gen. 3:8-15, 22-24; Isa. 9:2-7; Mt. 25:1-13; Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 2:1-7; Lk. 2:8-20**

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Stay Awake, Keep awake, Be on guard, Be vigilant, Be prepared, Be ready, Be attentive ... are all imperatives, demands and expectations of us this Advent season as we watch and wait for the promised coming of the one who saves the world. Advent is a time of waiting. So as we prepare for the Lord’s coming, we know that He has come, and will come on his own timetable, and in his own good time. Waiting is therefore essential. We need to learn to wait well in this school of waiting we call Advent.

Let us reflect on what it means to wait. We all know what it means all too well in our common human experience. It assumes many different forms and in many different ways.

We wait for the bus. It is because of the wait that I am reluctant to take the Bull City Connector up and down Main Street. We wait for the red light to change with our foot on the gas pedal because we are usually in a hurry. We wait in checkout lines. I was in the Kroger purchasing milk and frozen waffles during our latest wintry mix and tried to avoid the wrong register so I would not get stuck behind a buggy full of food that needed price checks. We wait anxiously for a diagnosis and a call from the doctor after medical tests have been taken. We wait for a friend at the coffee shop for a time of reconnection. Parents of teen-age youngsters wait with one eye open late at night for their children to drive home. Then there are the threshold moments of waiting for birth and death. A family, especially a pregnant

mother, waits for the birth of their child. It is a joyful time of anticipation but also one full of anxiety. (I remember dragging **Sheila** to the doctor's office several times when I did not hear our baby kick or the heart beat. I just should have bought a stethoscope.) This past week we celebrated the Service of Witness to the Resurrection on the occasion of the death of **Jim Hawkins**, former member of this church and former mayor of Durham. But what **Marilyn** and I heard over and over again from the family was the gathering of the family around the bed of someone they deeply loved as they waited for death to approach.

We wait so often and in so many ways that it would seem that we should all be experts. Some of us wait better than others. But there is another kind of waiting that we need to learn and that is we need to learn to wait for God. The season of Advent teaches us this essential lesson—how to wait for God.

To wait for God is really to hope in God. Our hope expects that God will be faithful to his promises. We stand confident in the face of our adversaries, false witnesses, and those breathing out violence. An example of this confidence is found in Psalm 27; the last verses are inspiring:

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord! (Ps 27:13-14)

This is the voice of someone who has come to know suffering and trouble in life. In the midst of that pain, the one who prays this Psalm waits for God and affirms that God is greater than anything that might harm or threaten us. Waiting for God truly means confident hope, even in and especially in the face of adversity and trouble.

But as much as Advent is about us and how we deal with waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise, Advent in a surprising turn tells us something else. We are waiting for God, but God is also waiting for us. God brings his people along. Despite our flaws, sins and failures, we can rely on God absolutely. Why?

Because God pours hope and love into us and waits for our response. Our hope in God does not disappoint. (And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Romans 5:5) God sends us his only-begotten son and puts that son, who comes to us as a vulnerable infant, in our arms and hands. God waits in confident hope that his love manifested in Jesus Christ will overwhelm us with its generosity and transform our little hearts into hearts full of generosity and gratitude.

In the end we learn to wait for God from a God who waits for us! We learn to wait for him whose day draws near and whose coming is certain.