

HE WILL COME

1Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! 2As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! 3For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. 4Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. 5You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? 6All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. 7No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. 8Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.

Waiting, waiting, waiting for a new day.

Justin and Nora know what it's like. They got the message from the doctor nine or ten months ago that their lives were going to change. Little Elliana was there – she was alive. WOW, what good news. But it wasn't time, yet, for her to be in the world cause she had to grow and develop. Little fingers, tiny toes – the beating heart, the sacs for breathing. Everything had to be made ready. Everything had to come together. And, in the meantime, Justin and Nora had to wait patiently with the promise that the new day would dawn.

And dawn it did. Look at her. So beautiful. So cuddly. So loved. And in that moment God transformed this wonderful husband and wife into the new parents they would become. Hope became reality. Promise became fact.

A similar thing happened to the world thousands of years ago. The promise was made that a new day would dawn. Adam and Eve, you see, after having fallen from God's grace, were hoping that God would bring change to them. But, in their case it was not just the change of a new baby being born after nine months. They were looking for something that could transform them and the world away from the chaos and darkness they had caused by yielding to the Tempter's lies. Once united in love and harmony, they now found selfishness and pride were a regular part of their daily diet. Once enjoying the beauty and wonder of God's creation, they now found that the earth was not as friendly, and sometimes brought hardship and difficulty.

But God had made a promise. A new day would come. A Messiah, a Savior, a Perfect One would one day bring rescue – would one day transform things back into harmony with God’s wonderful plan. God said it to the Tempter: “Your head will be crushed by Adam and Eve’s descendent. The end of your day is at hand.”

And Adam and Eve longed for it. And they dreamed of it. In fact, our Isaiah text echoes words that would have been spoken by Adam and Eve themselves:

“Oh, (Lord,) that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ...All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;. ... Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray.”

Adam and Eve believed in God’s promise. They trusted in Him who they knew to be faithful, loving and generous. But would it ever happen? Would the promise be fulfilled? Was there actually a new day on the horizon?

Well, it didn’t happen right away, like Adam and Eve thought it might. Thousands of years God’s people waited. Thousands of years the promise endured, from generation to generation. Some believed. Some gave up. Some held on. Others let go. And then, one night, in a stable, the cry was heard. The Virgin gave birth to a child – THE Child. THE ONE. And she named Him Jesus, because He would save His people from their sin.

Imagine Mary and Joseph to be the new Adam and Eve, and see the look of joy on their faces that looks a lot like this (show picture of Nora and Justin). JOY!!! But not just because the 9 months of waiting is over, but because the thousands of years of waiting are over. And they know it’s true: a new day has dawned. The Son of God was the sun that shined in their faces. And His light was the light of salvation for all who waited, for Abraham and Sarah, for Moses, for David, for Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel.

Waiting, waiting, waiting. That’s what Advent’s all about, my friends. It’s about a faith that cries out for God to fulfill His promises to us – for Him to show mercy to us – for Him to be faithful and work all things together for our good – for Him to be compassionate, and strengthen us with His kindness. A faith that cries out – and a faith that believes He will be faithful.

But the waiting is sometimes tough.

There is the corruption inside of us that causes jealousy, anger, fights and quarrels – that leads us to broken relationships, shattered dreams, misguided thinking, unfaithful actions. We long for a life without the burden of sin. And the waiting can eat away at our faith.

There is the fallenness of our bodies, that leads to physical diseases such as cancer and heart disease. There is the fallenness of our spirits that leads to things like depression, anxiety, phobias, addictions. We long for a life of physical and mental health. And the waiting can eat away at our faith.

There is the fallenness of our world, that leads to things such as earthquakes and floods and famines and tornados. There is the fallenness of the spiritual realm that leads to things such as the devil and demons and temptations and threats. We long for the new heaven and the new earth that are free of these things. And the waiting can eat away at our faith.

What can we say? We LONG for --- we YEARN for ... fulfillment. We long for a day when there will be no more struggle, no more pain, no more suffering, no more death. Like our text, like Adam and Eve, we cry out:

“Oh, (Lord,) that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ...All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;. ... Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray.”

But unlike Adam and Eve, we live in the era of fulfillment because we have seen God bring forth His only Son. And we know, without question, that our God IS a fulfiller of promises – that He did answer the cry of Adam and Eve, of Abraham and Sarah, of Moses, David, Isaiah and Daniel. And beyond sending His Son, He sent that Son to carry all our burdens and pains and struggles and trials – and to DIE for us.

That is a God worth trusting.

So, as we wait for Him to fulfill His ultimate plan, we do so with the knowledge that Jesus is “GOD WITH US.” And that means, while we wait, we are not alone.

His name is Newt, he was a student of mine at Concordia. I've probably told you about him before. He was born without three of his limbs in Romania. He was left in an orphanage and considered a lost one. But one day a young couple who had been praying for a child here in the US saw his picture as part of a Compassion Program at their church, and the wife's face lit up. "I saw this baby in a dream," she declared to her husband. I think we are being called to adopt him.

The husband was skeptical. Look at the problems. Consider the costs. They went home and the two of them prayed. "Lord, make it clear to us." The next week in church the pastor preached a sermon about the obscure figure in the Bible known as Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth is the disabled son of Jonathan to whom King David shows love and compassion.

That was it. They knew it was God's personal message to them. God had heard their cry for a child, and had answered with this boy. God had heard his cry for parents, and answered with these Americans.

Newt has grown to be an amazing Christian witness. Fully equipped with prosthetics, he plays sports, dances, and speaks as though he is not disabled at all.

Does he long for the day when his glorified body is no longer constrained by these limitations? Yes, of course. But he has Advent eyes: and so, in the "now" he lives by faith with joy. And the day will come, he believes, when he will live with all the Saints, made new in the power of God's love.

That's how all of us walk in the world. With one foot stuck in the struggles of this vale of tears, but with the other foot trusting that the day will come. And God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

May God give you Advent faith this season as you celebrate His powerful presence that sustains you now, and as you look forward to the new day coming when we will live in the perfection and beauty of eternity.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

