

Psalms of Waiting and Expectation

Psalms 27, 39 and 130 (selected verses)

December 3, 2023 First Sunday of Advent

Series: Symbols and Songs for the Season: Waiting with Hope

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*God is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?*

The Holy One is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?....

One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:

*to live in the house of the Holy One all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of her, and to inquire in the temple.*

For God will hide me in shelter in the day of trouble,

conceal me under the cover of a tent, and will set me high on a rock.

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

Wait for the Lord;

be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! Psalm 27:

Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.

Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; they heap up, and do not know who will gather.

And now, O God, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.

Psalm 39

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O God, should mark iniquities, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

I wait for God, my soul waits, and in this word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, Psalm 130

We had to get ready. They were coming. For many years when we lived in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, my sister Pam and her family would drive from Pittsburgh so we could be together for Thanksgiving. It was about 6 hour drive. Each year Pam would let me know if Mark was able to get off from work so they could come. If yes, then great! I put it on the calendar. I told Jeffrey and the boys. I like anticipating special events. There is hopeful anticipation. Sometimes we worry about something coming up, but other times we anticipate joy.

There is the action of Preparing - The guest room where a few things had been stored had to be cleaned out. It was like an archeological dig. I really loved when they come and I needed to clean that room... and the dining room table and guest bathroom.. so it was cheerful preparing.

And then we waited. Rooms had been cleaned and prepared. Menu made and food purchased. I made a timeline about when to put which dish into the oven. Then day was here. Time to wait. When did they leave? Traffic? Lunch? Expectant waiting. Cell phones and texting has taken some of guess work out of waiting. We used to make a pool of guesses. But there is still expectant waiting.

These experiences made me think about the season of Advent. A season of waiting. Expectant waiting, hopeful anticipation, preparation & being open to God breaking into our lives. Waking up to this presence and love.

It is a season that is more than waiting for Christmas day.

A season to prepare and focus on the hope and expectant waiting as we reflect on the light and love of Christ born again in our lives and hearts.

In Advent this year we will be looking at songs in the Bible that focus on different aspects of waiting and expectation. Today three Psalms, next week on Zechariah's song in Luke, then Mary's song – Magnificat and finally the Angel's song to the shepherds. These songs are poetry and point us to a larger vision of God's kin-dom or reign. How do songs help us pay attention? How do songs call our attention to what matters? Move us to action?

Two of the Psalms today are considered Psalms of David. They all include words about waiting for the Lord. The verb in Hebrew is *kaw-vaw* which means to twist, stretch, then of tension of enduring, waiting: Twisting strands together to wait.

The word 'wait' in Psalm 27 is from the same Hebrew word which is translated as 'hope' in Isaiah 40. It's the Hebrew word 'qavah' (הִקָּוָה). It's meaning includes: waiting expectantly. The word *tiqvah* is derived from the root קוה (*qavah*, Strong's #6960) meaning "to collect." The concrete meaning of *tiqvah* is a "line" or "cord," a collection of fibers that are twisted together to make a strong and firm cord. This same word is also used for the abstract idea of "hope," a strong and firm mind.

The literal meaning of the word is "to bind together like a cord." To bind together like a cord; what does that mean? It does not mean to tie a cord around a bundle of sticks to keep them together. Instead, picture in your mind the process of making a rope (cord) by twisting or weaving (binding) thin threads together to form the rope. The more strands that are twisted or woven together in a rope, the greater is its strength.

The literal definition of *qavah* implies strength through numbers. The more strands in your rope, the greater its strength. I think we need each other to wait. We need God's strength and love in worship, prayer, conversations, music, connections. Wait for the Lord is also hope in the Holy One, this Mystery, a hope that comes from strands twisted together.

In this season of waiting, we wonder how to wait. Is it like waiting for a family member to arrive for Thanksgiving dinner? Is it like waiting in a grocery store line when all we want to do is get home? Is it like waiting for the train or the bus, hoping it will be on time? Is it like waiting for retirement when we are counting down the days, months and years? Is it like waiting for test results or hoping the treatment is working? Is it like waiting for a baby to be born, full of expectation and hope? Is it waiting to see how the next months and years will unfold in our country? Is it waiting for peace to come to Ukraine, to Israel and Gaza and the West Bank?

Advent is a good time for Psalms. We need time for psalms of lament these days.

We can read and pray one of David's psalms as a way to voice our deepest joys and weightiest fears and prayers.

So come into the presence of God with songs.

Take to time reflect on what you are waiting for –

in your life, your family, our country and world.

Waiting is not passive – it is an awareness of the sacred threads that weave us together

And connect us to the Christ, to each other and all creation.

We wait for peace and we do what we live into a vision of shalom.

We wait for healing and hope and live into a love that sustains us.

We wait for a world that is reflect Christ's love and live in ways to show this love and light

We wait for Christmas and live in ways to minimize the consumerism and take in the
the beauty of candles and lights and people.

Let's join in that hope together and be one of the strands of love and kindness.

We wait with expectant waiting, hopeful anticipation, preparation as we prepare our hearts and homes for the gift of the Christ child who is came from Jesse's lineage from the house and line and life of David. Amen.