Jesu Juva

“Waiting for God in the Manger”

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

When God created everything in the beginning, it was good. And all of God’s good creation, working together in perfect harmony, was very good.

When Adam and Eve chose sin over God and all His good, not only they but all of creation was effected; all of creation was plunged into sin with them. Sin that disrupts God’s harmony. Sin that corrupts everything. *Even time.*

And so time is no longer seen as a good thing. Too much of it and we’re bored. Too little of it and we’re anxious and harried. Time is never just right - it either flies or drags. Sometimes we want more and sometimes we wish it would hurry up. We waste time. We try to buy time. We hate wasting time waiting in lines at the store and in traffic jams. Time is no ally, but something to beat, to conquer, to rule, to tame, to control. In the world. In life.

But the Church has a different relationship to time. God’s people wait. We are a waiting people. Waiting for Him. For His Word to be fulfilled.

In the Old Testament, waiting how many centuries for the promise of a Saviour to be fulfilled? Crying out like we heard from the prophet Isaiah tonight: *Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down!* And through all the waiting, mocking from a world that considers such waiting and delay proof of untruthfulness and foolishness.

But come the Saviour did. Zechariah was the first to hear of it, to be told, that the time of waiting was over. That the time had come. That God, *as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old . . . has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David . . . fulfilling the oath that he swore to our father Abraham.* And Zechariah was the first to hear of this because his son would be the one to go before the Saviour and announce His coming. Announce that the long-awaited mercy of God had come.

And fifteen months later, God did come. Born to a man and a virgin betrothed but not yet married, of the house and lineage of David, who traveled to Bethlehem to pay the census tax, laid Him in a manger, and then welcomed some shepherds who came and worshiped
Him because some angels had told them of this birth.

But still the Church waits. Now waiting for the God in the manger to come again, as He promised. Now not to save, but to make all things new. Waiting for the beginning of the new creation. A good and perfect creation again.

And so for twenty centuries now, the Church has sung in her liturgy “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

For twenty centuries now, the Church has prayed “Come, Lord Jesus!” And has heard the answer, “Surely, I am coming soon.”

For twenty centuries, the Church has been proclaiming and waiting, and hearing - like the saints of the Old Testament - the mocking question: Where is He? This one you are waiting for? Where is the promise of His coming? Everything goes on as usual! As if such waiting and delay proof of untruthfulness and foolishness.

And through all these centuries, even to this very day, we have no other answer than the Word of God. We must be patient, for He is patient. The Lord waits for He wants none to perish. The Lord is compassionate and merciful. The Judge is standing at the door, but He has not yet entered. There is still time. To turn. To repent. To believe. It is for us to wait and remain steadfast.

So we wait. Would it be better is Jesus had already come? If He would come now? NO. Jesus will come at exactly the right time. The best time. For He who created time and rules time and for whom time is not passing but eternal, knows the time.

We do not. The world does not. For us, time is passing. So we cannot wait. At least, we think we can’t. We must have everything immediately, now. For there may not be a tomorrow. And, some would think, since the Church never gets what she’s waiting for, it must not be true. Or real. Or worth anything. Jesus’ coming then as a baby, or now. An Advent Church, a waiting Church, is a fool in the eyes of the world.

Yet here we are. Adventing again. Waiting again.

But for some, instead of waiting, maybe something new would make the difference. If you don’t want to wait for a bus, call an Uber. Instead of going to the store and preparing your meal, call and have it delivered. So the Church, too? Maybe something new, a new focus, a new message - not just the same old waiting that has been so long disappointing.

But that would not be the truth. The Church lives by an old hope, an old faith. The world wants new and quick - new research, new science, new worldviews, new stories for itching ears. But that is not what we have. The Church always has an old truth. We
proclaim what has always been proclaimed - the greatest action of God that happened once for all. The message of the angels that unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this message of the angels, too: Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.

We have no other message that we could proclaim and still be true to ourselves and to our King.

So if we must wait, we wait. And we wait with the confidence and hope that Isaiah spoke: From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.

So we wait, but we wait not alone. We wait together, as the Body of Christ. And we wait with the Body and Blood of Christ nourishing and sustaining us as we wait. That when that very same Body and Blood comes again in glory, we welcome the one who has been with us all along, just hidden here and now to the faithless and unbelieving. But to us, to whom the Word has come and in whom the Spirit of God is working, we see what cannot be seen, and we wait for the coming one. For surely He is coming soon.

And with such a faith, maybe we can begin to see time differently. No longer as a foe, something to beat, to conquer, to rule, to tame, or to control - but as a gift. Each day, each moment, a gift, a mercy, to receive good and to give it; to wait and see what the Lord will do for us, and through us for others. Until time is no more - only eternity. Eternity with the one who is all good and only good. Eternity with the God who was in the manger.

Which, I think, is something worth waiting for.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.