

Waiting

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[0 : 0 0] how good are you at waiting i have to admit i'm quite impatient so waiting is not really my thing and for christmas i think if i said to most of my friends and family you've got to wait till december the 24th before you can start celebrating they'd be quite horrified now i love christmas but even for me the fact that the shops from about september have christmas music and christmas food and drinks and decorations in them is a little bit early although i do have to admit that last week one of the highlights of my week was going to waitrose um i did look at the mince pies and think i think i might get some of them and in our house we've got grown-up children but we've still had home alone on at least three times so far and i'm sure we've got elf and nativity and various other ones to come really really soon and then there's the christmas shopping now i do not like christmas shopping at the best of times and this weekend is black friday weekend which i know lots of people get really excited about but i have to say fills me with horror at the thought of queuing around the block at three in the morning in the freezing cold to get some money off a new tv and i imagine that during covid a lot of people are doing that online probably as we speak so with christmas there's a rush about it there's this attitude of rushing and wanting to skip over advent and get there at least that's with the world's christmas the world probably don't even know what advent is a lot of the time but for us as christians i think sometimes we think ah well we know what the reason for the season is so we celebrate it differently but i do think that actually that rushing attitude has crept into the church too now we've got grown-up kids but when they were younger and not so young when they wanted to put their christmas decorations up in november they would get heartily sick of their mum giving them a teachable moment about the fact that no christmas the real christmas that we celebrate is jesus's birthday and it doesn't start till christmas eve and it goes on for 12 days until epiphany on january the 6th and so therefore the earliest we can put our christmas decorations is up on the beginning of december and i do like to tell them and it really makes them fed up every day of christmas this is the first day of christmas this is the second day of christmas to remind them but for a lot of people i think christmas finishes often on boxing day or the day after when people are sick of having their christmas decorations up because they've had them up since october and um they sort of take them down chuck the tree out on the radio there's no more christmas music and the tv has stopped so um showing christmas adverts and now it's saying to us where are we going to go on our summer holidays just as the real christmas season gets going christmas seems to come earlier and earlier every year we can't wait for it and so the problem that we have is what do we do with advent you see advent is all about waiting and we don't like to wait we could like a lot of people just ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist but then i think we were going to be missing out on something that god has got for us during this season that begins today so today i'm here to tell you that advent is worth waiting for advent is a whole season of waiting but it's not just waiting idly sitting around twiddling our thumbs being bored it's a time that we should put some thoughtful preparation in a time to reflect and prepare and think about who and what we're waiting for in our old testament reading we see isaiah the prophet and he's desperate and he is waiting but

he's kind of crying out and saying oh that you would rend the heavens and come down he wants the lord to make his name known to his enemies that the nations might tremble at his presence but that judgment to be brought down upon god's enemies people doesn't happen straight away the people must wait isaiah also realizes that the lord is a god who acts on behalf of those who wait for him lots of faith and patience and perseverance is called for he knows that the lord will act at the right time he's going to deliver his people from their adversaries when it's the right time it's probably a good idea to be honest that the lord doesn't rend the heavens and come down right away upon those who sin against him because that would mean for a lot of us we might be in a lot of trouble but isaiah goes on to say it's a bit of a prayer of confession you are angry when we continue to sin against them and shall we be saved all 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 like the wind our sins sweep us away no one calls on your name or strives to take hold of you so for us we too have been sinning for a long time we've been continuing to sin and shall we be saved i think it's wonderful that the lord is so patient with us otherwise i don't think we would be if we were relying on our own righteousness to kind of hang out on a clothesline it would look a bit like dirty laundry as one of my friends says it's not very pure and it's not very edifying darling and also like the november leaves falling off the trees we too dry up and we fall to the ground even as christians we're far from perfect so we're left to the lord's mercy which is what isaiah prays for in the passage when he says yet you lord you are our father we are the clay and you are our potter we are all the work of your hand do not be angry beyond measure lord and do not remember our sins forever oh look on as we pray for we are all your people so advent is a time for prayer for reflection it enables to take a really good look at ourselves and see what actually our filthy garments are and say sorry for all the ways that we mess up and also sometimes when we're a bit like dried up leaves we're left with nothing but we need to ask for the lord's mercy which i think is what the lord wants for us so these times so in these weeks of waiting they help us to do that and so that is one reason why advent is worth waiting for and if we now look quickly at a different reading coming from the gospel of mark when jesus entered jerusalem we do this because often on advent sunday the church of england lectionary also gives us this passage because it's about jesus coming as king and the word advent means coming and the people of god at that time were greeting their king accordingly they knew who he was when they were shouting hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord blessed is the coming kingdom of our father david hosanna in the highest the coming kingdom of our father david except it didn't come till a thousand years after david there was more waiting but it was worth the wait jesus the messiah came into jerusalem in order to win our salvation and it came on a truly black friday on good friday when the sky turned black and god's son was left forsaken by his father as jesus suffered the penalty of our sins

but it took his death to wipe out our debt and to put us in the black forever the riches of his righteousness have been credited to our account and that's amazing that's worth its weight in gold so advent is a season of waiting we've seen it today and over the next few weeks we'll see it to come we'll see john the baptist serving as the warmer part if you will getting the crowd ready for the main attraction of jesus about to come on stage and john calling us to make straight the way of the lord as we wait for him to come and mary herself she had to wait nine months from the time of conception or the annunciation as it's called to the time of the birth christmas did not come without some waiting so friends today i'm encouraging you to take advantage of this season of waiting god has a work to do in all of us for advent don't be tempted to skip over it and to rush onto christmas and rush into the new year which i know is tempting we just want to get 2020 out of the way and move into 2021 but let advent be advent i know that we've got the world and all the craziness that's going on at the moment and also our culture the culture we're living in working against us but let advent be advent god's got some really good stuff in store for us this season a time of reflective repentance having some quiet prayer and getting away from the madness i can recommend a couple of resources for you if you're if you're not sure there's lots of things out there but a couple of things i've seen are the bible society has produced something called hashtag advent challenge which is a lot of resources that you can use and also the church of england's website has got a page on it called comfort and joy which they've produced lots of stuff for advent and christmas so maybe take a look or it could be just something as easy as getting up a little bit earlier and praying and spending time with god a bit more or maybe getting out one of the gospels maybe luke and maybe looking a little bit more deeply into that and praying through that or it could be maybe starting listening to lectio 365 i don't know just do something different take some time to prepare and to welcome our lord appropriately at christmas and also at his second coming if we have patience and we wait patiently for the lord to act in his own time and in his own way then we'll know that it's for our best and that's what advent is about and that's why advent is worth waiting for let's pray dear lord we pray to you the lord of time and space by whose love we are saved help us to patiently wait and to prepare ourselves for the time that christ comes in glory help us to be honest with ourselves and to see what needs changing and transforming in our lives as individuals and as members of your church we ask this in your name lord amen