**Sunday 03 December 2023 – Caroline Seaton**

Advent Sunday First Sunday Service at Christ Church. Based on Mark Ch 13:24-37. Caroline Seaton.

This talk is preceded by a short dramatic version of the Gospel reading for today.

Waiting stirs up all sorts of emotions and as I said at the start depending on what you are waiting for determines how you feel and how wait.

It can be with butterflies in your tummy whist waiting for your favourite person to on-appear on stage or your child or grandchild appears in their first nativity or school concert! It’s a nervous excited feeling.

I have butterflies in my tummy when visiting the dentist. That’s a nervous dreaded butterfly feeling!

Waiting for test results can be a very anxious wait, with all sorts of things going through your mind! Have I? Haven’t I? What if? Again a nervous feeling and whilst we try and put it out of our minds we find concentration difficult.

Waiting can be difficult.

As in our drama the household promised to do what they could to keep the house in order whist the Master was away.

‘I’ll keep the kitchen spick and span’ said Spoons.

‘There won’t be any dust in the house when you get back’ said Duster.

‘I’ll keep the garden looking nice and tidy with no weeds in sight’ said Mower.

‘ I’ll keep everything in good working order’ said Odd Job

But as time went on, they became disheartened. There was no word from the Master and no sign or message as to when he would return! The promised to be true to their word was gone. They got fed up and one by one, they gave up.

But suddenly a phone call puts Duster in a panic! They had given up hope of the Master ever coming back but now he was!

Advent is the build up with eager anticipation and excitement to the birth of the Christ child. But is that not the end of our period of waiting!

So, do we ever find ourselves in such a situation- Not being ready? For some panic sets in at the thought of not being ready - particularly at this time of year. But is that the only thing we are called to being ready for ?

Our reading demonstrates how waiting can be difficult.

We are waiting . waiting for what? We are waiting for something that we can never envisage as no one knows when it will happen. As we say in our communion service - Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again.

In advent we are looking back with joy to when the Messiah was born but more importantly waiting for his return on earth. The second coming.

This is what we need to centre our minds on. We don’t know when Christ will come again, do we, so we should always keep ready.

As with Spoons, the cook, in our drama we mustn’t be complacent but continue to feed our minds by not only reading the Bible but understanding what it is saying to us, to prepare ourselves further for the work of God here on earth. And it’s not just through reading the Bible; we can learn so much from pictures and music, from discussion and sharing. We have the Advent reflections – ‘Sleepers Awake’ starting this week which is an opportunity to take time out to ponder anew the season.

Duster gave up but we must always keep our minds clear and focused on our calling to serve one another as he has served us. If we see someone less fortunate than ourselves, do we always respond with compassion? Someone begging outside the supermarket; someone who is drug dependant for whatever reason. As in the reading last week – when did we see someone in need and help them ?; when did we see someone hungry, and we fed them?

Mower gave up too. He lost the focus of his purpose. It’s important we keep our minds clear of the impacting trappings of everyday life, pruning out those thoughts and actions which are not worthy of a life that is Christ centred.

Odd job went off on a shopping spree leaving the household to fall into disrepair. We mustn’t let our lives fall into a state where if Christ came again, he found us lacking.

In the reflection from MU Diary for December Advent is summed up beautifully - We live in the time of now and not yet, between the first and the second coming of Christ. The story is only half told: the other half awaits. The plan of salvation is complete, yet its outworking is still to unfold. Unlike Christ’s first coming, which was witnessed by a select few, his second coming will be seen by all. May we always be ready and waiting to meet our glorious lord.

Waiting can be difficult for our everyday lives on earth. But oh, what joy when Christ comes again if we are waiting with joyful expectation.