

What Are We Waiting For?

You've heard the story of the Christmas Guest. It usually plays on the radio about a thousand times between now and the end of the year. It's about an old man, named Clarence, who has a dream that Jesus is coming to visit him on Christmas day. The dream is so real that he cancels his plans for visiting his friends on Christmas day and stays home waiting for the Messiah to come. He cooks food, cleans his house, builds a nice warm fire, puts on his best clothes and waits. The rest of the story is a lesson in how the messiah comes to us in ways we don't expect. For Clarence, the messiah was a hungry soldier coming home from war who needed shoes, a woman gathering wood and needing a coat, and a small lost child. In each case, Clarence did not think he was helping his expected honored guest and he used the things that he had prepared for the Messiah to help those who came to his door. Yet each time he served the least of the kingdom, Clarence was serving the Lord, and in fact was serving the Lord right there where he was.

Clarence believed the Messiah was coming to see him so he did everything he could to make sure that when Jesus came he would feel welcome. He cleaned his house, prepared warm food and drink and made sure his home was warm and inviting. He was a one man Church council practicing stewardship, mission, and goal-oriented leadership, driven by vision. His mission statement was Jesus is coming to see me today and everything he did was directed toward that goal.

Being prepared meant that Clarence was ready to meet the needs of those who came to his door. He didn't recognize the Messiah because he was expecting a king. But Jesus came to him three times. Are we prepared to meet Jesus when he comes to us? Do we really think that we would recognize

Jesus if he was here with us today? Some would say sure the guy in the long robe and sandals would easily stand out in this crowd? But what about his ability to look like everyone else. Mary didn't recognize Jesus right away at the tomb. The disciples didn't recognize him when he appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. Jesus could very easily be sitting among us right now and we wouldn't know unless he made himself known. So shouldn't we be treating each other as if he were here? Shouldn't we be making our church warm and inviting so that Jesus will feel welcome when he comes, because each person we welcome might be the Messiah?

What is our mission statement? Just like Clarence our mission statement should be the goal that drives us to be ready for the King to come visit us. The mission statement of The United Methodist Church is: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. God has placed this church here for a reason. How are we doing? Are we serving the people of this community right where we are? Are we transforming the world that is within our reach? The Bible scriptures for today are saying that Jesus is going to come again. In fact he is nearer to us now than ever before.

Rom 13:9-14

9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

(NIV) Paul wrote that to the church at Rome nearly 2000 years ago. Don't you think it's closer to coming true now than then?

The passages tell us that our purpose is to teach others the ways of God and the best way to teach is by example.

Isaiah 2:1-5 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. ³ Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Psalms 122:1-9 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" ² Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. ³ Jerusalem-- built as a city that is bound firmly together. ⁴ To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. ⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. ⁷ Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." ⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." ⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Matthew 24:36-44 ³⁶ "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴² Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Just like Clarence was driven to get ready to meet his Christmas guest, we need to be driven to get ready to meet our honored guest. The way to get ready is through prayer for the good of the church and the community; learn the ways of God and teach them to others; do as much good as you can; and know that the time for waiting is shorter now than ever. The king is coming and we must be prepared.