Advent 4 December 24, 2017

All Saints’ Church Year B

2 Samuel 7:1-11; 16 Romans 16:25-27

Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26 Luke 1:26-38

I like waiting rooms. This is a new realization for me. They’re like comfort food for me: a grilled cheese sandwich with tomato soup or meatloaf and mashed potatoes. I feel at ease, comfortable, invited in, into a place to rest, to breathe, to observe others waiting with me, to read magazines, (like Peoples), that I would not read otherwise.

I like waiting rooms because they also give me the illusion of avoidance. Maybe I can wait here forever- much better than going into the next room, which is usually to see a dentist, a doctor, a vet, or a lawyer or accountant. Now, all these folks make me very uncomfortable. I feel out of control. I hate the walk from the waiting room into the examination room or into the inner chambers of an office; I don’t know what news they are going to give me. I don’t like all the new smells, the instruments, the computer screens opened, finances displayed, questions asked. I just want to go home.

I’ve noticed lately that I am getting in the habit of arriving early to any appointment if there is a waiting room involved. I have no idea why; I’m just noticing this new behavior. Maybe it’s because life is getting more fragile and I need time and space to transition. I’m also noticing that I am praying in waiting rooms- for those with me, for those whom I am seeking counsel/advice/care, for all those who don’t have the luxury of care, for people everywhere who are waiting…. Either for good or bad news, for change, for death, for new life. Waiting.

Advent is our season of Waiting. I have never thought of Advent as a penitential season, but rather one of anticipation, one of paying attention, one of expectancy- of a Jesus sighting as we prepare to invite the Living Christ into our world who is already living within our soul. Every Advent, we commit to the act of bidding- making more room within our own inn of welcome.

There’s so much waiting going on. Joseph and Mary, who are too young, waiting for the birth of their son; Pregnant Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin, who is too old, waiting, as Mary runs to her with strange and glorious news; Zechariah waiting to have his lips unsealed; Anna and Simeon, godparents, praying in the Temple for the Messiah; the shepherds, in their fields, the wise kings in their far-fetched places, and even the government, Herod in his palace, are all waiting.

So much waiting, with expectancy, for what? Something new, rising from the horizon, following yonder star of hope, good news, release, forgiveness, love, healing, union, where peace and righteousness kiss, where we are clothed in garments of salvation. How are we going to receive this gift?

And then it dawned on me. God is waiting, too. God is not just waiting for us to receive Jesus, but to conceive Jesus with the incarnation of our own birthing faith, bringing Jesus into the world, through our eyes, hands and heart. Our gift to God, and God is waiting.

How are we risking our own traveling into the wilderness to arrive at our destination? How are we making room in the inn for the nobodies of the world? How are we dancing with joy at heralding angels, revealing our arms raised to the heavens, even as the world turns on war and crucifying carnage? How are we trusting in tomorrow, saying Yes, and bearing gifts?

There’s a wonderful Sicilian tradition that the tree that carved the cradle is the same tree that made the cross. Our Choir, during Lessons and Carols, last Sunday sang a carol that lifted up the power of this tradition… “I am heart that houses the cone, the cone enclosing the cedar. I am the cedar sawn for the cradle, forest of the body, body of the tree. I am the cradle rocking the baby, I am the baby containing the man, I am the man nailed on the cross, tree of the body, body of the forest. I am the cross sawn from the cedar, I am the cedar enclosed in the cone, I am the cone housed in the heart.”

The birth of Jesus marks time as circular, cyclical, bending in a non-linear way. Christ is the beginning and the end, the Omega in whom all things converge, and we are circling, turning, with Christ as our Center, spinning us into an arc of life under God’s hand, living as the Carol triumphs, “here in my heart, Jesus springing.”

God is waiting to see how Jesus will be springing into our lives. The Ancient Heart of all Creation is with us in all our waiting rooms, steady with us through our doors of life, and no matter what we cross at the threshold, we are being buoyed up to move as Jesus moved.

Let us close with a bidding prayed by Meister Eckert, 14th century mystic and teacher:

“What good is it to me if the eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself?

What good is it if Mary is full of grace, and I am not also full of grace?

What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and culture?”[[1]](#footnote-1)

We are the cone housed in the heart, here in our hearts Jesus, springing. AMEN

1. First heard at the SSJE monastery [↑](#footnote-ref-1)