

## Advent Devotional December 9, 2018

### Scripture

2 Peter 3:11-18

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. <sup>17</sup>You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup>But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Karen Rohrer, Director, Church Planting Initiative

*“. . . we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. . . .”*

When I think about the Christmas story, the story where God made God’s home in our midst, where for a moment righteousness was at home in this troubled world, and new heavens and a new earth peeked in at us, for just 33 years, I am filled with longing. What would it be like if this world were not the kind of place that sent righteousness to a cross? Can we imagine a world where parents in war-torn countries weren’t clutching their children and running for their lives, only to find borders closed in their faces? Can we imagine a world without the Herods who murder children as pawns in their grabbing for power? A world where the innocent rest safely and the righteous are safe in homes, not under threat of tyranny, violence, or cruelty? To whatever degree we can imagine that, how can we ever be patient with the patience of our Lord? The more I learn about trauma, the more it seems to me that human suffering can be so deep and destructive that it cannot be quantified—yet we are to accept the patience of a God that carries to come to the aid of children. How?

I can’t pretend to answer that question—but I am struck by the command to “regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.” What is being saved by this patience in a world that seems bent on growing destruction? That command is a hard word as we wait for Christmas, as we wait starving for the in-breaking of the kind of Messiah who will rule over powers and principalities, overthrow the ugliness of unjust governing powers, and rule the nations with an iron fist. But, friends, *that* Messiah isn’t coming. Whatever it does or doesn’t mean, if the text is to be trusted our Messiah doesn’t save with an iron fist—our Messiah saves with patience. We do not get to choose our salvation. No doubt we, like the disciples and the crowds of Palm Sunday, would choose differently. Instead, as we wait for righteousness to make its home in our midst, we must be patient. We must be patient and love patience, because our slow and patient God is coming to us again as a baby, saving us again, over the course of 33 years and the course of human history, with the slow vulnerability of the very children we would defend. We may rail against the pace, but salvation is the slow patient work of God over our whole lives. This Christmas, may we find a way to be content to watch again over the baby Jesus—and

over all the children of the human family—and to wait with hope, knowing that the salvation of our God always comes and stays with those who wait.

**Prayer**

Patient God, in the midst of the world's grief and pain, give us the strength to stand with the vulnerable as we await the slow work of all our salvation together. In our watching and waiting, teach us to trust your ways, so that we might not lose heart. And, loving God, please don't delay coming again to us. We and those we love are frightened, broken, and hard pressed on every side. Even so, come Lord Jesus.