

I. Anticipation (song – Carly Simon)

A. *We can never know about the days to come
but we think about them anyway.
And I wonder if I'm really with you now
or just chasing after some finer day*

*Anticipation, anticipation
is making me late
is keeping me waiting.*

B. That was Carly Simon of course, but it could have been the prophet Isaiah.

1. In fact, even more so some 2,500 years ago, the prophet Isaiah had reason to be looking for days to come when God would return favor to the people of Judah who had been laid to waste by the Babylonians and taken into exile into Babylon.
2. Isaiah's understanding was that God had turned away from Judah, because they had turned away from God.
3. "But you were angry," writes Isaiah, "and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

4. Yes, instead of worshipping the God of Israel and caring for the poor, the widows, the orphans and the aliens in their midst, the people of Judah had chosen to follow other gods; gods they believed would do a better job than the God of Israel at bring them more prosperity.
5. I want to say this one more time, because this IS why Isaiah believed that the Judeans were destroyed by the Babylonians. Instead of worshipping the God of Israel and caring for the poor, the widows, the orphans and the aliens in their midst, the people of Judah had chosen to follow other gods; gods they believed would do a better job than the God of Israel at bring them more prosperity.
6. Isaiah describes the situation saying, “There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.”
7. Knowing the very apostasy of the Judeans, Isaiah still has the nerve to pray to God saying, “Yet, O HOLY ONE, you are our Parent; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O HOLY ONE, and do not remember iniquity forever.

Now consider,
we are all your people.

8. And so with Carly Simon, Isaiah must have been thinking --

We can never know about the days to come
but we think about them anyway.

And I wonder if I'm really with you now
or just chasing after some finer day.

9. And the day that Isaiah anticipated was the day that God would forgive Judah's iniquity and would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at God's presence -- to make God's name known to God's adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at God's presence!

C. While I believe Isaiah was right about God's anger at Judah for their apostasy, their turning away from God and God's law; their turning away from the mercy and compassion for those most in need, the kind of mercy and compassion that God had shown them;

even though they had been unfaithful to God, God was never unfaithful to them.

D. Judah sowed the seeds of its own demise. God didn't have to do anything.

The greed and arrogance of Judah had ensured that they would be crushed.

And what Isaiah had missed was that even though Judah had turned away from God, God never turned away from Judah.

- E. God's love was there and some of them in the midst of the exile found that God even followed them into Babylon and was with them there and others discovered that God's love was not bought by the flesh of burning animals, but rather by the burning desire of one's spirit for God's love.
 - F. It was in the time of exile in Babylon that the ground was prepared for the kind of message that one Jesus of Nazareth would bring 500 years later.
- II. Now it would be silly, foolish, arrogant, and seriously whinny to compare our situation today to kind of problems that the Judeans faced during the days of the Babylonian Exile.
- A. The Imperialistic and incredibly powerful nation of Babylon had finally had enough of the little annoying Judah and they decided to demolish it and take its religious and political leaders into exile in Babylon and teach them how to be faithful subjects.

- B. Meanwhile the vast majority of Judah's population, the peasantry and lower classes were left back in Judah with no leadership or temple;
left to try to scratch out a living in the devastation that had been left in the wake of the Babylonian tsunami.
 - C. We hardly find ourselves in such dire straits, yet we too can never know about the days to come
but we think about them anyway.
And wonder if you're really with us now or if we are just chasing after some finer day.
Anticipation is still keeping us waiting.
- III. Like Isaiah we find ourselves living in anticipation of a time when God's love will be the foundation all people's lives.
- A. We are waiting in anticipation of a time when God's Spirit will be embodied in our laws and in our actions.
 - B. We are waiting in anticipation of a day when God's love will be incarnated in God's people.
 - C. We are waiting for another incarnation of Christ to fill our spirits and guide our lives so that the world will live in harmony.

- D. It is the celebration of the one who came as such an incarnation 2000 years ago that we celebrate in Christ's Mass.
 - E. It is the fulfillment of that one's vision that we await and that we look forward to in the celebration of Christ's Mass.
- IV. It all sounds so wonderful, but as in the time of Isaiah, as in the time of Jesus, there are very powerful forces that are very interested in keeping such visions from becoming a reality.
- A. Just as in the days of Isaiah, when it was the actions of people that sent Judah to its day of suffering;
today it is the actions of people that brings about most of the suffering in the world.
 - B. It should be no surprise that it will be the action of people guided by the Spirit of God that will bring an end to the suffering and bring the advent of Christ's incarnation.
 - C. The problem is that as in the days that led to the Judean exile,
most people aren't interested in worshipping God.
They are much more interested in giving lip

service to God, while in reality they are chasing after other gods that they believe will bring them more prosperity.

V. And so in this day and time we find ourselves in anticipation of worship. True worship of the True God.

A. This is so much harder to do -- than to say; and lip service to the True God, comes so easily, while worship of the false gods is so easy.

1. There is the god of comfort.
2. The god of prosperity,
3. The god of novelty – that burning desire the newest and the best.
4. The god of peer pressure.
5. The god of keeping up with the Joneses.
6. The god of keeping up appearances.
7. And these are just a few of all the gods we worship that pull us away from a true worship of the True God.

B. True worship is a bit more challenging.

1. Even the concept of worship is a little tricky for some.

- a) How many of you here this morning feel comfortable expounding on the meaning of worship?
 - b) It's really quite simple.
 - c) Worship is what increases the worth of God, the value of God;
of course it's a bit hard trying to figure out what will really increase the value of something that is already of infinite value.
 - d) And our worship here really doesn't increase the God's worth.
What it does is increase God's worth to **us**;
it increased the value of God in our lives.
It actually makes our lives more valuable, not Gods.
2. So what is true worship?
- a) Worship is what we do that makes God happy.
 - b) And what makes God happy is when we do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
3. Now I'm not saying we don't do this.
- a) In fact, I think most of us here try really hard to make God happy.
 - b) We try really hard to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

- c) And when we do so, we become the embodiment of God, the incarnation of Christ.
- d) Oh, but who can go into Costco, or Wal-Mart or watch TV, for that matter, without forgetting to worship God.
- e) Was worshipping God foremost on your mind on Black Friday?
I know it is called Black Friday because it is the day that businesses hope to financially get into the black (which is good);
but I can't help but also see it as an appropriate title for the day when millions of folks worship at the idol of gods other than the God of light – a truly black Friday.
- f) How does one worship God at Costco?

VI. It will be the true worship of the True God that will bring the Advent of God's Realm.

- A. And so, we Anticipate worship.
- B. We anticipate the True Worship of the True God by all the world, which will hail the Advent of the Day of the Lord.
- C. But of course such worship only happens one person at a time.

D. So repeat after me:
Let Christ's peace
fill the earth
and let it
begin with me.
AMEN.