

What amazed me as a youth was how entertaining Disneyworld was. Every other experience of crowds had been boring. In most crowds you notice the heat, the unruly kids, the melted ice cream. But at Disneyworld you greet cartoon characters, you see beautiful sets, you hear music. Standing in line, so much goes on you don't notice you're standing in line. It's a great way to wait.

And most of us don't wait well. Either we're impatient and want the wait to end, or we waste away the time we wait through. We want service and we want it now. We want a reply and we want it now. But we put off doing the ironing or visiting the relatives because it can wait.

Did you ever photograph a beautiful sunset when you had two shots left on the roll? As the colors gather in the West you wait for the perfect moment. "Is it now or do I wait? Is it now or do I wait? Or have I missed it already?" And all the while we miss the glories of sunset swirling around.

If you're someone who doesn't wait well, you're in good company. You share the bench with Jesus' cousin, the man he calls the greatest ever born, John the Baptist. Where was the greatest man ever born? John was in jail. Jails are built for the sole purpose of waiting. While he waits, John doubts. The greatest man ever born cannot wait well. He sends friends to ask Jesus, "All this stuff I've been saying about you, am I right? Are you the one we've been waiting for?"

Jesus instructs John in two words how to wait well. Jesus says, "Look around." What John sees is every bit as entertaining as the lines at Disneyworld: The blind see, the lame leap, the deaf hear, the dead come to life. When John looks around, his wait becomes easy.

In 536 B.C. Cyrus the Great of Persia freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon and let them return home to Jerusalem. Isaiah had already prophesied the great return. The captives will return to Jerusalem, he says. Joy will be on their faces; sorrow will flee. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, and the mute will cry for joy. Even nature will change: The desert will flower; the parched land will cry with joy. The Negeb will become like Carmel and Sharon. Imagine the Saraha becoming like Venice. Or Raytown like the Plaza! Be strong, Isaiah says, take heart. God is coming with vengeance, and all will marvel. Just look around, he says, just look around.

My brothers and sisters, while you wait for Christmas, look around! Look at the signs of Christmas: People give generously, they write their friends, they open doors to their neighbors. Project Warmth set records this year; scientists made a breakthrough in AIDS research; the Soviet Union and the Vatican are establishing diplomatic ties; freedom is in the air. And the Chiefs! The Chiefs are winning again!

If we rejoice in these signs we are waiting well. Advent is not the time to wait for something to happen; it's the time for things to happen while we wait. While we wait for Christ to come again, God has given us the hands of Jesus for work, the heart of Jesus for love, and the laughter of Jesus for play. What are we waiting for?