

“Waiting and Pledging Yourself Anew”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

November 29, 2015

The Old Testament lesson for today is Psalm 25, verses 1 through 10. I’m reading from *The Common English Bible*. I offer my life to you, Lord. My God, I trust you. Please don’t let me be put to shame! Don’t let my enemies rejoice over me! For that matter, don’t let anyone who hopes in you be put to shame; instead, let those who are treacherous without excuse be put to shame. Make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—because you are the God who saves me.

I put my hope in you all day long. Lord, remember your compassion and faithful love—they are forever! But don’t remember the sins of my youth or my wrongdoing. Remember me only according to your faithful love for the sake of your goodness, Lord. The Lord is good and does the right thing; he teaches sinners which way they should go. God guides the weak to justice, teaching them his way. All the Lord’s paths are loving and faithful for those who keep his covenant and laws. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. Lord of steadfast love and mercy, touch our will, continually redirect it, and make it yours. Lead our thinking and show yourself as our Savior. Make us know your ways and teach us your paths. Lead us in your truth for you are the God of our salvation. Remind us we’re your children, and remember your love and mercy as you touch our lives. Amen.

During each Sunday of the Advent season, we focus on one of the four virtues Jesus brings us: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. The first candle of Advent is lit to remember that Jesus is our hope. This time of year we wait expectantly to

celebrate the coming of Christ—the true light of the world for Christ gives love and light to all. Christ gives light to all living things—weeds and corn—as the drama we just watched portrayed. Living things look up to the sun and enjoy its warmth and nourishment—just as the weed and the ear of corn.

The drama showed us that some can begin their lives with many challenges—just like the weed. Others begin their lives with a good start—like the corn, but the first line of the poem makes a good point. Whether we begin our lives with many challenges or with a good start, it's up to us to continually offer our lives to God.

Psalms 25 is an acrostic poem, so each line starts with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it has all the elements of a lament. The psalmist is experiencing God's absence and cries out to be delivered from suffering. He wants God's ear and feels haunted by sins from the past. So, he petitions God for forgiveness and mercy.

Sometimes in our waiting for God to act we feel a dryness. We ask, “Where are you God? Why are you silent in the midst of my suffering?” And yet, we know, from the very start of our lives God showers his grace on all people. The paths we walk as we acknowledge God are loving and faithful. We have a deep sense of our belonging to God, and we *want* to offer our lives. We want to offer our *whole* being to God, and we receive the truth that God alone saves us.

As God teaches, we listen, and we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice—holy and acceptable. But as the drama portrayed, life happens, and sometimes it doesn't take much to orient ourselves in the wrong direction. We get distracted and turn and position ourselves away from the one who planted us, and we lose our focus. The birds fly down and sweep us up, and we can find ourselves wandering away from God's presence.

We know we belong to God for we offer our very lives to God. We live with hope, and we wait for the Lord, but we're prone to wander at times. The birds take the form of the enemy in the drama. The enemy knows our weaknesses and takes full advantage and can heap feelings of shame and guilt on us. But we remember, God is the God who saves us.

We believe and know that we belong to God. So we yearn and are compelled to know God's will and do it. The psalmist hopes in God all day long and trusts him. Yet, in verse 7 he admits his wrongdoing and confesses he hasn't been consistent in his worship. So the psalmist makes an urgent request and appeals to God's character of forgiveness, love, and compassion.

So, when it's all said and done, the psalmist's belongingness to God is a result of offering his life to God, *but it's also* God's willingness to forgive. Though we wander at times, God's faithful love and forgiveness bring us back again. The psalmist cries out for God to remember *only* his faithful love—for God knows our human condition.

Have you wondered what your purpose is in life? Most of us have. It's not a mystery or a puzzle if we just do what we know to do, God guides and leads us. Seek God in prayer, read the Bible, know God in relationship, and partnership with God as you're led along your spiritual journey. You may only have enough light for one day, but that's all you need.

Just like the corn, we're given a chance to grow and do something good. The rain falls and the Sun shines on us to provide our need. So put down your roots, lift up your heads to be nourished by the light of God's love, and bloom where you're planted.

Wait for the Lord and hope as you trust God. Let your trust become a way of life. Make every effort to worship God throughout the day and adopt a godly lifestyle but know that sometimes we fail and make the wrong

choice. We're not perfect, but our worthiness isn't based on *our* perfection. Our worthiness is based on our appeal to Christ for forgiveness and mercy.

So let's celebrate God's willingness to forgive! Let's remember the past faithfulness of God as we wait for the second coming of Christ! Let's wait expectantly, pledging our lives anew and receiving God's forgiveness.

Let's pray. God we offer ourselves to you and pledge ourselves anew as we wait expectantly for your return. Help us to yield ourselves to your way of life and be conformed more and more to your character. Make us receptive to your will and way God.

Wash us of pride and arrogance and make us more teachable. Take away our guilt and shame so we can receive the blessings of God and allow you to truly liberate us. Take away any fear or doubt that might restrain our trust. Make us flourish as never before. Help us to participate and be in relationship with you to pray and read your word as your Spirit applies it to our hearts. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.