

Second Advent - Peace

Welcome here. Please join me in prayer:

Creator and sustainer. Help us to find moments of peace in these busy times. Allow our minds to settle and focus on you. Amen.

Congratulations! You did it. Advent, this time of waiting started. And you did it. I know it's so hard to wait, but you did incredible. You waited for a whole, entire week. Way to go!

And, now what? Oh, we have to keep waiting. 3 more weeks?
SIGH.

I don't know about you, but I love starting something new. I get so excited by a new thing, a new project. At the beginning I have all these ideas for how this new thing will go. It will be the best thing I've ever made. The greatest essay, the most beautiful picture, the tastiest loaf of bread.

This is especially true before I actually start doing this new thing. The image I have in my head of this new thing is perfect. I can see just how great it will be. It's this bright, shiny new idea.

But then, I actually start. And pretty soon, that excitement begins to fade, The shine of the new wears off and I realize, ugh, this is work.

And then, there I am working away, starting to feel a little annoyed about how much work this is, and the thing is just not turning out the way I want.

The essay is not making sense, the proportions on the picture are wonky, the dough is too sticky.

In just about every thing I've ever done, in every project, every idea I've started working on, I have made mistakes. I screwed up, I have moments of failure.

And, I don't know about you, but I hate it when things aren't working out. When I'm failing. It's so disheartening.

And all that Hope that I started with, begins to be hard to hold onto.

Last week Ms. Reimer Barkwell welcomed us into this season of Advent talking about Hope. But, here we are, a whole week later, and we're still not at the end. We still haven't finished.

So, what do we do? How do we continue to wait, continue to do the work? As we make mistakes, as we fail.

Bible Verse: Ecclesiastes 3: 18-22 ?

I told myself that God tests us to teach us that we're just like the animals. For our fate and the fate of all living things are the same; as one dies, so dies the other. We all have the same breath, and we have no advantage over other forms of life. It's all a mist of air. We all go to the same place. All forms of life are from dust, and return to dust. Who knows whether our soul really goes up while an animal's soul goes down?

In short, I see there is nothing better than that we enjoy our work. For this is our destiny; who among us can see what will come after us?

SONG: Silent Night

We pick our story up right after the son, Sam, asks his mom, Morley, how to knit.

Story

Candle Lighting

Last week I got a new book for the library, *The Work of Art* by Adam Moss. In it the author speaks with more than 40 artists about how one of their works of art came to be.

Moss says that his aim is to "render the *experience* of creativity - that is, the frustration, elation, regret, first glimmers, second thoughts, distress and triumph that lead to works of art." (p. 12)

Moss is broad in what he considers art. There's the usual suspects, painters, musicians, and novelists. But also journalists, sand castle builders, and chefs.

Images: Explain

What struck me when looking at these is the amount of things that are crossed out or shifted. Ideas thrown at the page, then changed or discarded. If you read the interviews, almost nothing becomes what the artist set out to make.

The path to creating something is not a straight line. There are many mistakes along the way.

I realized that most things are like this. Your assignments, the video games you play, the friendships you have, the work of waiting for something.

You should see the notes for this chapel. I have false starts, ideas that didn't fit, things that were at the end that are now at the beginning. This very thought used to be three thoughts later and then I moved it up.

Things almost never turn out the same as that bright, shiny idea you had before you started.

But, when you're in the middle of creating, the middle of a project, all those mistakes, changes, and digressions can make it hard to keep going. It can be frustrating, disheartening.

Last week Ms. Reimer Barkwell talked about the hard work Morely was doing, both to build a chair, but also to have her family buy in on this Christmas present idea. And, even with all her work, things are not turning out as she planned.

Sam is distracted, Stefanie might have just gotten her neighbour to do it for her, Dave doesn't seem to be doing anything at all.

But, we know that things rarely, if ever, go as planned. Projects rarely go in a straight line. There are mistakes, things we didn't see coming, moments of failure. But, we have to just keep working at it.

And that's the difficult part about Advent. In this season we're invited to sit in the waiting. To sit in the discomfort. To not rush to the end, when we realize things have turned out ok, but to feel those uncomfortable feelings.

But, what about Peace? This is the Peace chapel after all.

With all that doing, changing, and mistake making I often feel overwhelmed. But, there are always moments of peace to be found.

Sam found it in the back seat of the car. Him and his friends quietly knitting. Even if they didn't realize it, that was a moment of peace.

Morley had it last week, as she worked away at the chair. Even though it isn't turning out quite as she hoped, she still had those moments in her class.

It is a skill to notice those moments, one that can be nurtured, and practiced.

In working on this chapel I came across the idea of candle time. Writing in the middle of one of the most confusing, overwhelming periods lately, deep pandemic lockdowns, Brenna Davis wrote about her practice of candle time.

Every evening she would turn off all the lights in her place and light a candle. She would then simply sit and watch the flame.

Letting the candle draw her focus, and, for a time, block out the confusing, disheartening world, and find peace.

When you know what times of peace feel like they are easier to notice.

I encourage you to try something like this. It doesn't have to be long, just a few minutes. But a practice like candle time can help us to find peace in the middle of confusing and difficult times.

SONG: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Sending:

Go from here, into the busy, confusing world, and be aware of those beautiful moments of peace.

Amen. Go in Peace.