

Sunday, November 25, 2018 – Last Sunday of the Church Year
“While You Wait”

Jude 20-25

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV
Text/Application Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Man, waiting is tough. A month to go until Christmas, kids. I wrote this before the big game yesterday, but I'm either thrilled at the end of a long wait to beat Ohio State, or I'm eagerly waiting. We've been eagerly waiting some time to call a new associate pastor. And it appears at this moment at least as time runs short on our church year that we'll begin another season of waiting, Advent, waiting for Jesus to come.

Lots of us get antsy waiting. Waiting in line, waiting on hold, waiting in traffic. Waiting for test results, waiting for forgiveness from a loved one, waiting for an end to suffering. We're all waiting, in our own way, for something.

So too the early Christians written to in this short little letter. I mean short – the word count in my sermon manuscript this morning is longer than the entire book of Jude. But of the theme there can be no mistake – Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, the progeny of Mary and Joseph is writing to encourage Jesus followers about salvation. They're experiencing a variety of issues while they wait – some people mock them, others are trying to lead people away from the truth that salvation comes through Jesus and Him alone. And while we don't even know whether these disciples of Jesus were Jews or Gentiles we do know that Christians generally speaking would face terrible persecution by the Roman government in the first three centuries after Christ's birth.

In times of agony and suffering, waiting can be especially unbearable. Jude has a few points of encouragement intended for both people then and for us today.

1. Encourage each other. God doesn't cut us loose and say, "My work here is done" like some eagle having taught her babies to fly. We stay with each other, we do life together, we build each other up in our hardships, whatever they may be.

A couple of weeks ago I found myself with the shoe on the other foot. I woke up to the terrible news of the shooting at the club in Thousand Oaks. An old seminary classmate who I don't know terribly well is a pastor there. I remembered the texts and calls and emails from

people around the country after 1 October – some that I knew well, others I barely knew, and almost none of them that I had the time to respond to and take in that awful week, tending to a traumatized community. I said a prayer and I sent of a quick email, much like the many short emails I received to Matt.

Friends, that means something. One of the things the Elders do here is they reach out periodically to see how things are going for you – is there something we can pray for, help you with? But more than some formalized structure the church provides, I think it happens most naturally in your friendships here. Make use of that – folks in your Bible studies, the people you sit next to in the pew – say hi to someone you see and don't know. Ask how they're doing, ask if you can pray for them, or let them know if there's something they can pray about for you, in your most holy faith as we pray in the Holy Spirit, knowing God hears us. Part of why we're here is to build each other up. We may be too large of a congregation for everyone to know everyone, but we do want everyone to know and be known.

2. We provide a safe place for people to struggle. Let's be honest, none of us have all the answers, none of us have everything figured out. God has mercy on us – undeserved pity – anyway. We get to be that kind of place for each other. If you live under the delusion that all of the people worshipping here each week are professed Christians, or that everyone here feels confidence in their faith and the promises God makes, think again. Perhaps hearing me say that sounds surprising, or even alarming. Let me instead suggest that we expect that and make it part of our love and care. We get to show mercy to each other. I'm reminded of the father of a demon-possessed boy in Mark 9. He asks Jesus to help, if he can. "If I can?!" Jesus asks? The father says, "I believe! Help my unbelief."

Sometimes I think "church people," regular church-going Christians are afraid to talk about their own doubts and fears in an open way. God's intention is that this be a safe place for you to struggle and not get shamed or ostracized. Yes, we do teach at Mountain View that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and there is no way to the Father except through Him. But how are we going to be a help and blessing to each other, much less people who don't know Jesus yet, if we can't be safe to be open about our doubts and our fears today? We're here to shore each other up – to have somebody to lean on.

3. Ultimately, the power to keep us firmly waiting right to the end is Jesus. We each have agonies and struggles, doubts and fears, difficulty waiting – but Jesus presents you before His Father without fault. How? Because Jesus took your agonies and struggles, doubts and fears, lack of patience and discouragement to the cross and is victorious over those things. When your Father in Heaven looks at you, He sees you blameless and full of joy. No matter how you feel about it, that's what God sees, that's who you really are. While you wait, know that God sees you through the eyes of mercy – through the rose-colored glasses of Jesus' blood shed for the forgiveness of your sin. God bless you today in Jesus' name, Amen.