**Fourth, pay attention to what it is that masters you**. Peter criticizes those false teachers for promising freedom while being "slaves of corruption" and then he makes a poignant statement: "People are slaves to whatever masters them" (2:19). As we move through the Advent season, that's a great question to ponder: What is it that masters us? To what have we become a slave? Is it money, power, career, or something else? As Bob Dylan sang, "It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody." Who are you serving? Peter urges us to serve Jesus.

**Fifth, use your time wisely**. Peter urges us to "regard the patience of the Lord as salvation" (v. 15). In this interim period as we await the return of Jesus, we have an opportunity to use the extra time God gives us to share our faith with others. Peter spent every waking minute looking to share the good news about Jesus with anyone he met; and he did it with a sense of urgency that anticipated Christ's coming again. Disciples of Jesus recognize that God has given us time to spread the word about Jesus, and we need to use that time wisely. We may use words to speak what we know of Jesus or it may be by the example of our lives that others see Jesus. Those conversations in the waiting room or on the plane are opportunities to have spiritual conversations as the Spirit leads. As Peter says in his first letter, "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

The waiting might be the hardest part of being a Christian, but it's also an important part. God has given us the tools and the time to bring God’s good news of salvation to the world in anticipation of a second Advent. Let's wait well!

Prayer: God, as You sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus, help me to clear the path in my heart, too. Show me the distractions in my life that block me from all-out worship of You this Advent. Lord, I await Your coming! As I celebrate the first Advent, the first coming, I look toward the day where I will see You face to face. Give me a heart, Lord, that looks for Your coming every day. Help me to live my life where I'm constantly seeking Your presence. My offering to You today is my righteous life, for I know I am only clean because of Jesus. Show me today how I need to be refined, purified, forgiven. Give me the strength to ask for forgiveness and to change my ways. In Jesus’ name I ask this. Amen.

**Source:** "15 things to do while waiting at the airport." Travelettes Website. February 18, 2017. travelettes.net. Retrieved May 13, 2017.

**Thank You for Waiting**

Sunday, December 10, 2017 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

So, something’s gone wrong and you need to call customer service. You tap in the number and wait. Then you hear an automated voice: "Thank you for calling. All our service agents are currently assisting other customers. Your call is very important to us. Thank you for waiting. " You hear those words and you know you're going to be put on hold. Sometimes, the robot voice will even tell you how long the wait time is expected to be. How thoughtful of them! As if that somehow makes the waiting easier. But, as Tom Petty sang in his hit song with the Heartbreakers in 1981, "The waiting is the hardest part."

Back in 1981 it was certainly true that waiting was hard. For those of you born after the turn of the 21st century, waiting used to be really, really boring. Imagine, for example, sitting in the waiting room of the dentist’s office with no smartphone and only some seriously outdated magazines to read. You would've had no contact with the world except for an over-sized clock on the wall, loudly ticking off the minutes very slowly. Then, when you heard your name called, you’d be ushered into an examination room where you would wait some more, this time without the magazines, but with the same loudly ticking clock! No wonder they call us "patients."

Today, we have multiple entertainment options right at our fingertips to keep us occupied while we wait. But despite all that technology, waiting is still hard. We wait at airports; we wait in waiting rooms; we wait in traffic; we wait at the post office; we wait at the bank; we wait speak to a human being at the call center. We wait...and our patience runs thin.

With a little planning, however, you can make that wait time productive and perhaps even fun. Here's a list of things you can do while waiting:

* Strike up a conversation with a stranger and learn their story.
* Keep a journal describing everything you see in the waiting area.
* Work through your unread emails. (Not fun, but a great way to burn an hour or 3).
* Schedule those necessary appointments with your doctor or dentist or accountant.
* Recharge your devices; share your charger with someone and start a conversation.
* Buy kitschy postcards and write notes to your friends and family and mail them later.
* Ask the person next to you about their favorite band or podcast and give it a listen.
* Cull through your phone's photo gallery and delete pictures you don't need.
* Ask a waiter, clerk or flight attendant how their day is going.
* Skype your parents, grandparents or kids and catch up with them.

These are some great ideas if you have a couple of hours to kill; but what if the wait time is going to be longer, like a couple of thousand years? That's the dilemma the early church faced after Jesus' ascension into heaven (Acts 1:1-11). He promised to return, and many in the church believed that return was imminent. As time passed, however, and as persecution of Christians intensified, the waiting became the hardest part for the church. In fact, some were beginning to question whether Jesus would return at all.

This is what Peter addresses in his second letter. In the first letter, the writer encourages the church, which is being pressured by external forces, while here in the second letter he addresses the problems arising from internal sources: namely, false teachers who are skeptical about Jesus' return and whose teaching encouraged looser ethical and moral behavior (2:15). The letter reminds the church that Jesus will, indeed, return as promised to bring justice and abolish evil, ushering in the new creation, and that the way they conduct themselves as they wait for his return will have implications for eternity.

Peter appreciates that the waiting is hard, but what seems like a long, slow waiting period for Christ's return is, according to Peter, a gift from God! The Lord is not slow or tardy, but rather delays Christ’s return on purpose, extending God’s own patience and giving more time for people to "come to repentance" (v. 9). We need this extra time, writes Peter, because the "day of the Lord," is coming like a "thief," when we do not expect it; and on that day our deeds will be "disclosed," our sins laid bare, and the world destroyed as if cleansed by fire (v. 10). In the interim (even if it's a long interim), Peter asks, "What sort of persons ought you to be?" (v. 11). A new heaven and new earth are coming in which righteousness will dwell; so, what should we be doing while we wait (v. 13)?
The short answer for Peter is that those who follow Christ should begin living the righteous life of the future new creation as though it has already arrived. There will be a period of waiting, but it's not to be a passive one in which we, like the disciples at the ascension, keep staring up at the sky waiting for the Lord's arrival (Acts 1:11). Instead, Peter says that there are certain things we should "strive" to do in the interim. If we look closely at Peter’s

message, we discover a list of at least five things we can (and must) do while waiting for the new Advent:

**First, remember the promise of the first Advent**. Peter opens the letter by reminding his readers of the faith that they received "through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:1). That's a powerful witness to the Incarnation. Jesus is both God and Savior. Peter and the other disciples were eyewitnesses to the Incarnation of God in Christ, remembering the voice of God during the transfiguration proclaiming, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (1:17). As we celebrate Advent, it's a chance for us to remember again that God comes to us in person in Jesus and, in doing so, God confirms the truthfulness of God’s promises toward us. The Lord for whom we wait is always true to God’s word!

**Second, grow in the image of Christ**. When Jesus returns, Peter urges us to "be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish" (v. 14). This was the way God created us to be from the beginning when we were created God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). Human sin corrupted us, but because of what Christ did for us through his life, death, resurrection and ascension, we can once again become "participants of the divine nature" (1:4-5). Peter thus urges us to make every effort to support our faith in Christ through acting out the virtues of goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love (1:5-7). Focusing on these things will keep us from being "ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). This is what Peter means by living lives of "holiness and godliness": we are to live lives that look more and more like Jesus (v. 11).

**Third, dig deep into the Scriptures**. Peter encourages us to dig deep into the Scriptures and be attentive to God’s Word "as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (1:19). Daily engagement from Scripture, particularly when read in community with the church, keeps us from sliding into interpretations that suit ourselves and our desires and guards against false prophets and their "destructive opinions" (2:1). In a world where everyone is ready to overload their phones with information and opinions, Scripture calls us back to the truth of God revealed by those inspired by the Holy Spirit. We must always compare the words of others to the Word of God. As Peter puts it, "You should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles" (3:2). When we engage the Scriptures daily, we galvanize our memory of God's Word and more consistently live it out each day.