

James 5:7-8, 2nd Advent - 6.12.2015.

Waiting for him who is coming!

⁷ Dear brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who eagerly look for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They patiently wait for the precious harvest to ripen. ⁸ You, too, must be patient. And take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. [NLT]

Waiting for it to rain - that is something we know about in South Africa, and especially during these past months again, when it's been so dry.

Waiting for rain - and then it's there. Farmers wait for rain - because they know that it will come. They just don't know when (or if it will be in time for the harvest - but that's another matter.)

Waiting for rain - because it is the source of life for our earth.

We are encouraged today that just as we wait for rain - as farmers wait for rain - that we are to

Wait for him who is coming!

Above all we are reminded to **wait patiently** for the Lord's return. That does not mean doing nothing!

So, what does this waiting look like?

A farmer who waits patiently for the rain, must be ready when the rains come to get the seed into the ground as soon as possible. He waits - and he prays and hopes. He takes note of the signs which might indicate that the rains are coming - even if the sky still has not a single cloud to indicate the onset of rain.

The farmer does not control the weather - but he can control what he needs to do his part to ensure the growth of the crop once the rains come. Those farmers who just hope for the best, and spend their days fishing, on the golf course or in some bar, because anything they do, won't really make a difference, will be found wanting when the rain arrives.

Waiting patiently for the Lord's return - we are to do so in a world in which it seems that there are other powers at work. Sometimes it may feel that we are in the middle of a real drought - especially when we see and hear of persecution of Christians, of terror attacks in Paris, in Nigeria, in Kenya, in the USA ...

Is it any use waiting? Should we not just try to enjoy life - to get as much as we can out of life? It is precisely because of these temptations - because of the many things which are out there, and because we don't want to miss out on life - that we are encouraged to patiently wait for the return of our Lord.

The season of Advent is a time to intensify our waiting - to take stock of the priorities we have set ourselves. The thing is, we may think that we don't want to miss out on the many opportunities this world offers us - and thereby really miss out on the life our Lord has ready for us.

The optimism with which the farmer in Israel waited for the autumn and spring rains stemmed from his experience: he knew the rains would come - just as they always had. There was no reason to doubt that the rain would not come this time round. After all, God had given his promise after the Flood that "As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night." (Genesis 8:22)

We wait confidently for the return of Christ - even though it has been many centuries since the church has started to wait, because we know him, who gives us his promise today also. The entire Bible is filled with God's promises - promises to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; to the people in captivity promising them that they would return and rebuild Jerusalem. To the greatest promise of all: the promise of the coming of the Messiah. Of all the promises God made, there is no promise which he did not keep!

You, too, must be patient. And take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. We may wait confidently for the return of the Lord - because he promised, at his Ascension, to return just as he had risen to heaven. Just as he kept his promises in the past he will do so in the future: He will return as the Lord of all in might and glory to judge the living and the dead.

Waiting for rain - and then it comes !

The time of Advent wants to encourage us to make time - to actively step out of the rush of which surrounds us at this time, and to look for him.

Waiting for the coming of the Lord - because he comes to be God with us as our Immanuel - the God who is with us now already. And he who will be with us in eternity.