

**WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 1, 2020**  
**Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN**

**“How Long?”**

**READING: Rev.6:9-11 – When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.**

Uncle Rudy was my sponsor and Godfather. He was Mom’s younger brother, and in our family the tradition was that sponsors gave a Christmas gift to their “doudlas” (the German word we used for Godchildren) until they were confirmed. So, Uncle Rudy had inquired through his wife, Aunt Esther, as to what I might want for Christmas. My response had been, “A firetruck!” I had, of course, closely studied the Sears and Penney’s catalogs when they arrived. After hours of study and calculation, I had decided upon a Tonka firetruck that had hoses and ladders and a fire hydrant, bells, whistles, and bows! And, now Uncle Rudy was coming over to deliver my Christmas present, but he was late!

Aunt Esther had talked to Mom at church that morning to see if they could come by that evening at 7:00. Mom had said that would be fine, and then she had told me about it. So, at twenty minutes to seven, I was already parked at the westside kitchen window watching for Uncle Rudy’s lights. We lived in a flat-as-a-pancake area, so I would see his lights coming over two miles away. At seven there were no lights. At seven-oh-five there were no lights. At seven-ten there were still no lights, and now I began to worry. I ran to Mom with the question, “How long before he gets here?” She told me to be patient. They were coming; not to worry.

Well, easy for her to say! She wasn’t expecting a Tonka firetruck! I was! I went back to the window, and I alternated between staring into the dark distance to the west and eye-balling the clock on the other side of the kitchen. Seven-fifteen, seven-twenty, seven-twenty-five – they all crept by and my dread only increased. How long must I wait? When would he come? When would my hopes and dreams find fulfillment? Oh, the minutes dragged by!

In our text today, we hear the martyrs ask the same question I did, “How long, O Lord? How long must we wait for our deaths to be avenged?” Advent is a season of dual purpose. On the one hand, it is the season of preparation to receive the Good News and to celebrate the birth of the Savior at Bethlehem. But it also has a secondary purpose of reminding us to be prepared for his second coming as well. The Church has often lifted up the question, “How long, O Lord? How long?” In times of persecution, in times of war, in times of pestilence, the Faithful have asked for Jesus to come and bring an end to her suffering. But, like the martyrs, the answer has always been, “Wait a little longer.” The Lord has his own timeline to fulfill – a plan that he will reveal at “just the right time.”

Jesus came to the earth, as St. Paul says in Romans 5, "...at just the right time, when we were still powerless..." That first coming had been prophesied for centuries, and there must have been countless faithful Hebrews who had longed and pleaded for the Messiah's coming only to realize that they must, "Wait a little longer." Today, in the midst of a pandemic, surrounded by confusion, discord, isolation, and unhappiness, the Faithful may well pray with added fervor, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And, maybe he will. But, until that day he calls on us to be faithful, to be patient, to be active servants, and to speak the Good News to the multitudes who yet do not know or acknowledge Jesus as their Savior. "How long, O Lord?" And he answers, "Wait a little longer."

I finally saw Uncle Rudy's lights turn off on Reese Road and onto Weaver. I watched with growing anticipation as those lights came ever closer. When the car started to slow down as it neared our house, I knew he had finally arrived. Within minutes, I had my present in my hands. The wrapping paper flew off, and there it was: my Tonka firetruck in all of its glory! It turned out that one of my cousin's sponsors had shown up unexpectedly, and they had been delayed for about 40 minutes. Oh, I remember those 40 minutes stretching into eternity! "How long?" I must have asked by Mom a dozen times. "How long, O Lord?" says the Church. "Wait a little longer." He'll be here at "just the right time!" Amen.

**PRAYER:**

**ANNOUNCEMENT(S):**

**ADVENT SERIES: "Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with Your God" (Micah 6:8)  
Wednesdays, 7:00 P.M. – December 9, and 16. Tomorrow Pastor Woods  
will speak to us about "Loving Mercy".**

**"GIFTS FOR KIDS" – We intend to gift 45-60 children and teens again this Christmas by the purchase, wrapping, and distribution of toys, games, and clothing needs for children in needy families – both within the congregation and in our community. I'll need shoppers and wrappers. If you can do one or both, write a little note and get it to me, or call Karen and ask her to put a note on my desk. You'll hear from me. And, you can make donations for this worthy cause by envelope or internet. Simply indicate "Gifts for Kids" on the envelope or on the website. We'll use every dollar to make a child's Christmas a little brighter.**