What are we waiting for?

On a minor irritant scale
  We wait in traffic to get to work.
  Or we wait at the checkout line.
  Or we wait for the next installment
    Of our favorite Netflix series.

On a more serious scale

We wait for a bitter fight to be over.

We wait to hear test results from a biopsy.

We wait for strength
  To fight nagging personal problems.

What are we waiting for?

On a much broader scale . . .

In the world around us, as did Habakkuk
  We see the violence and injustices around us.

We see devastating effects of climate change
  From Mexico Beach, FL to Paradise CA.
We helplessly wait.

We see the madness of gun violence and mass killings.
  We wait along with the bereaved.

We wait for peace . . .
What Are We Waiting For?

From wars raging . . .
   Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen
   Terrorism, ethnic conflicts
   Domestic abuse

And from the wars raging within us . . .
   Stress, anxiety, depression and despair.

Destruction and violence are ever-present
   Justice paralyzed by division.

We wait . . .

We wait for change.

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During the height of the Boko Haram conflict in NE Nigeria
   As the terrorists moved about freely
      Burning and killing and terrorizing . . .

I received a call from Dr. Rebecca Dali
   Wife to the President of EYN (COB in Nigeria).

They were fleeing for their lives . . .
   All the officials of the church in Nigeria
      Running from the terror stalking them.

She calls me right in the middle of their flight
   And begs me to pray for them!

It was surreal!

There I was sitting in my cozy pastor’s study
   While she and her husband join thousands of others
      Fleeing from Boko Haram.

Please pray for us, our families, all of us,
What Are We Waiting For?

Who are in harm’s way
  Pray that we might be spared.

And deep within my soul,
  Then and there . . .
  And for months afterwards
  Like Habakkuk, I prayed . . .

“How long, O Lord, must I call for help
  But you do not listen?”

How long, must I cry out to you, “Violence!”
  But you do not save?”

How long do we have to wait?”

I don’t have to tell you
  We live in deeply disturbing times.

What are we waiting for?

We’re waiting for things to get better.
Habakkuk lived in the turbulent times
  Between the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC
  And the fall of the Southern Kingdom in 587 BC.

The Assyrian army had swept down from the north
  And destroyed one city after another
  Brutally killing men, women, and children.

And not long afterwards the Babylonians
  Struck the southern Kingdom
  Destroying the city of Jerusalem
  And sending the people into exile.
Violence, injustice and destruction surrounded Habakkuk.

And he cried out
   God, why won’t you do something about this?

Habakkuk questions why God would allow evil to persist.

It is a question many believers struggle with.

There’s a word for it: theodicy.

Theodicy seeks to explain why a perfectly good Almighty, and all-knowing God permits evil.

Habakkuk wants to know why?

He stands watch and waits for God to answer.

And God answers!

**Habakkuk 2:3 (CEV)**

3 At the time I have decided, my words will come true. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting—it will happen!

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Wait a minute!

Is that the answer we’re looking for?

Wait? Be patient?
   Salvation will come?
      Wait for it?

Uh-uh!

This is where I have a problem with God!
What Are We Waiting For?

I look around, as did Habakkuk
    And I see terrible injustices . . .
    I see horrible things happening . . .
    I see ignorance overwhelming truth . . .
    And I think, can it get any worse?

And I pray for God to intercede!

“How long, Lord, will you allow this to continue?”

And what I hear
    From our all-loving, all-powerful God
    Is to be patient?

~~

Unfortunately for us who are believers in God
    Waiting is a part of faith.

It is a spiritual discipline, whether we like it or not.

As God says in Habakkuk
    The righteous shall live by faith . . .

Faith that God in his infinite wisdom
    Will guide the course of history to its redemptive end.

And so, what are we waiting for?

Ultimately, we are waiting for salvation!

For God to save us from our untenable circumstances.

For peace on earth, good will toward all!

To bring peace and justice to a world gone mad!
The righteous shall live by faith . . .
   Faith that God has the final word!

That’s what we are waiting for!
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Which brings us to Advent.

As did Habakkuk, we find ourselves in turbulent times.

The Season of Advent teaches us to wait.

I don’t know about you
   But I struggle a bit with Advent.

Just what are we waiting for?

Are we waiting for Jesus to be born?

2000 years ago Jesus was born!
   So every year we celebrate his birthday?

But wait! There’s another aspect to this.

In Advent, we also wait for Jesus to be spiritually born.

That somehow, with a spiritual birth within us
   We can experience the peace and joy
      That saves and sustains through life and death.

With the Spirit’s presence with us
   We can help to bring about the changes
      We have been so longingly waiting for?

But wait! There’s yet another aspect to all of this.
In Advent, we also wait for Christ to come again
In the Second Advent or what’s called the Parousia.

The time when God redeems and restores all of creation.

The Season of Advent is a season of waiting.

What are we waiting for?
We wait for the Messiah.

The Catholics speak of it this way:

Christ comes in history
Christ comes in mystery
And Christ comes in majesty.

In Advent, we prepare to celebrate Christ’s historical birth.
An event that happened on the timeline of history.

In Advent, anticipate Christ to come in mystery.
To be born again in our hearts
Here, in this present age
Through the presence of his Spirit.

His birth is a spiritual birth within.

And in Advent, we anticipate Christ coming in majesty
To complete the work of God’s
Final act of redemption in history.

In Advent, we are to recognize Christ coming
In history, in mystery, and in majesty.
What Are We Waiting For?

We currently live between the first and the second coming.

The beginning of God’s final act of redemption
Is in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels, shepherds, and wise men recognized it.

The end of God’s final act of redemption on earth
Reaches its completion when Christ comes again.

In the meanwhile . . . we wait

But waiting is not a passive thing.
As you might expect from the definition of the word.

We are not to sit around waiting for God to intervene.

Waiting is an active thing.

Christ is with us!

From Frederick Buechner

“So to wait for Christ to come in his fullness is not just a passive thing, a pious, prayerful, churchly thing. On the contrary, to wait for Christ to come in his fullness is above all else to act in Christ's stead as fully as we know how. To wait for Christ is as best we can to be Christ to those who need us to be Christ to them most and to bring them the most we have of Christ's healing and hope because unless we bring it, it may never be brought at all.”

So while we wait for God’s kingdom
We continue to work of Jesus
Peacefully, simply and together.
What Are We Waiting For?

We work to overcome poverty, division and despair

By sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

And even though turbulent times are with us
Though violence and injustice is all around

We will, as Habakkuk reminds us in our last passage
Continue to trust in the God of history,
Mystery, and majesty.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (TLB)
17 Even though the fig trees are all destroyed, and there is neither blossom left nor fruit; though the olive crops all fail, and the fields lie barren; even if the flocks die in the fields and the cattle barns are empty, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will be happy in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord God is my strength; he will give me the speed of a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.

So what are we waiting for?