What does it mean to live in these Advent Days, in these days of preparation? What does it mean to wait for the Christ? I want to attempt to answer this question from three different settings – each may give a glimpse, which may help us expand into our own experiences. And through it all, listen to the words written by Shirley Erena Murry: *"We wait for you, we long for you to come. O Jesus Christ, bring Christmas to our homes."*

In the first story, it will be a joyous Christmas for one particular family who just received some wonderful news. After 10 years, they had received a phone call from their daughter. She wanted to return home.

The only contact had been an occasional

E-mail, and now they were going to see her again!

It had been a long time – they missed out on her 21st birthday – and her 30th. They always believed she would return sometime but now she will be home in two weeks, in time for Christmas!

They have been waiting a long time for this moment, but now the waiting time is almost over. These next two weeks of waiting will have a focused purpose and requires preparation – much preparation. Her room will need to be made ready -- her favorite meals will need to be prepared --perhaps a welcome party that would include some of her old friends. And overriding everything is the great joy of the good news: She’s coming home!

What makes such experience good news? The love between parents and child? The absence and the hope of a return that has been carried for ten years?

And what about the thoughts and fears that underlie the good news – how will she have changed? Will she fit in after all this time? Good news, but, perhaps, with just hint of anxiety.

*We wait for you, we long for you to come. O Jesus Christ*, bring Christmas to our home.

Our second story is found in the Gospel lesson for today. Life was pretty awful for the community Mark was addressing. Jerusalem overwhelmed, the city starved out, the temple destroyed. The people’s only hope was that the end of the world might be coming soon.

No stories of baby Jesus, no stories of stars or angels, shepherds or magi – just the good news that Jesus’ is coming and they would receive the Holy Spirit.

*"We wait for you, we long for you to come. O Jesus Christ, bring Christmas to our home."*

Our third story is about a young man who left home twenty years ago – storming off on his motor bike. – the echoes of hurtful words still lingering with his parents.

But now, for the first time in 20 years, he was back in the neighborhood. He parked his motor bike just around the corner from that home where so many bitter words had been exchanged. Thirty-six years old and he was frightened to put his head around the corner.

Earlier he had written – *“I’m older now – and wiser – I’m sorry. If you can find it in your hearts to forgive me – if you would have me back – even just for a visit - I’ll drive past next Wednesday – and if you’re willing to have me home, just hang a white handkerchief outside my old bedroom window.”*

Now Wednesday had come – and there he was, hiding behind the corner, petrified, not sure what he would do if he was not welcome. Eventually he got up the courage, peered around the corner, looking homeward – wondering, would there be a white handkerchief at the window.

The sight that greeted him was unmistakable – white sheets, white towels, white tablecloths streamed from every window.

*"We wait for you, we long for you to come. O Jesus Christ, bring Christmas to our home."*

My dear Friends in Christ, white tablecloths are in abundance here at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church and they symbolize God’s unending Grace! – they stream not from the windows, but from every pew and from our communion table – letting us know that this is a two-way waiting: not only do we wait for Jesus but Jesus waits for us – arms outstretched in welcome – longing for us to experience wholeness and healing.

However, that which has been longed for requires change – change of attitude, change of life experience, change that may not be quite what we had hoped for.

May it be that we are willing to respond – to be loved, to be received, to be transformed so that Christ does indeed bring Christmas to our home this year. Amen.