



People Waiting by Evelyn Williams

“What I say to you, I say to all: Keep awake!” Mark 13.37

From the bottom of the painting, the faces stretch up into the distance becoming smaller and smaller, less easy to read. They resemble each other – pasty, hairless, wide-eyed - yet no two are exactly the same. Their creator, Evelyn Williams (1929-2012), seems to be emphasising their common humanity as well as the uniqueness of each precious life.

But who *are* they? And what are they doing? The only answer Williams offers through the title of her work is that they are *People Waiting*.

That’s us this Advent: a community in waiting. That’s us *every* Advent but this year the waiting has a strange new resonance. Our need for liberation has been underlined by lockdown; our demands for racial, social and climate justice have become more and more urgent as the year has gone on; our longing for a Saviour has been sharpened by the collective fear and grief of 2020.

Whose are these upturned, expectant faces? Looking at them through the lens of pandemic, we notice things we wouldn’t previously have noticed. All those bodies, impossibly close to each other, and not a mask in sight! Who *are* they?

Why they’re us, of course. There we are looking up for inspiration, a word, a steer - anxious and unsure of our ability to navigate our way through the twists and turns of this extraordinary year. And there too are those we’ve encountered locally or seen further

afield on our screens, bewildered by change and loss, their vulnerability etched starkly across the page.

So here we all are on this Advent Sunday, humanity at large, huddled together for comfort, longing for deliverance. Obedient to the cry to ‘keep awake’, our eyes are wide open and we are scanning the skies for a sign.

And the sign *will* come. Into our desperate need for God will be born God’s very self...

“If you are so weary with the struggle of living that you have no strength even to want God, yet are still dissatisfied that you don’t, you are already keeping Advent in your life.”

Maria Boulding

Prayer

**Fearful and weary,
we watch and wait...
Into the world’s deep need,
come Lord Jesus!
Amen**