



Week 2-December 8: Jerusalem-Waiting

Read: Luke 1:5-17

Christmas is a magical time of the year. Decorations hung around the house with care signaling that this is a special time of year. Lights on the tree sparkling and adding a glow to the room. All the best food and Christmas treats laid out on the table. Family gathered and in a good mood. Christmas music playing lightly in the background to add to the ambiance. However, for kids it can be tortuous.

As a child I remember the distinct pain of staring longingly at all the gifts wrapped under the tree for weeks. It felt like time lengthened out. Every minute felt like an hour. Then on Christmas we would have to listen to the story of Jesus' birth being read from the Bible, each syllable feeling elongated. The anticipation of what was to come creating a bubbling energy in the room. But the waiting was easily the hardest part.

Advent is a season of anticipation. A period of time specifically designed for waiting. We don't often think of waiting as being a good thing. Think of the annoyance you feel as you wait for your coffee at Starbucks with twenty other customers crowded into a space designed for five. The times you sit waiting for an oil change and wondering why the guys are moving at the pace of a sloth, don't they do this all the time? The post office lines at this time of year that seem to exist regardless of the time you go. The red light when you're already late. Waiting doesn't feel productive and most definitely doesn't feel like a gift.

Zechariah must have felt those pangs as he waited silently, writing was his only way to express himself. The cocktail of emotions inside of him must have felt confusing. Joy at the prospect of a child. Curiosity at being chosen by God to have this once in a lifetime encounter with an Angel. Anger at having his means of communication muted because he doubted. Waiting likely felt at odds with God's promise. However, as Rob notes, "Waiting is not easy to do, but it is a spiritual activity." Spiritual activity? Spiritual because just as pregnancy is growing a human being, waiting is growing emotions and trust inside of our souls. Zechariah was gestating a wealth of faith and trust that could never have been built another way.



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ON THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM

When it comes down to it, waiting is really the exercise of hope. The belief that although we can't see the fulfillment that is coming, the moment that we live in is not the end of the story. The faith that things are happening in the background of our lives even as we live in the tension of time. To be human is to wait. The question is not will you have to wait for something, it's **what do you do with the times that you are held captive to waiting?**

Time is the only commodity that you cannot replenish. You have a set amount of time, and so, even while waiting, you are living in a precious moment. **What are you waiting for this Advent season?** Rob notes, "Waiting upon the Lord means there are things that we are incapable of getting on our own." **Where do your capabilities end and your needs continue this Christmas?**

Lean into the slow drip of waiting this year. Anticipate what God is capable of growing and birthing in your spirit as you wait. Listen for the rumble in the distance of God's movement on the horizon. Advent has the potential to knit together your sorrows and your blessings from this year into a rich tapestry inside your soul. **You might find that who you are becoming as you wait is more profound than the person who would've existed otherwise.**

Closing Prayer

Holy God, your loving faithfulness can catch us by surprise. Sometimes, we forget or take for granted your graciousness. Sometimes, we fail to expect you to take action. Sometimes, you act in ways we would never have imagined or dreamed. May your Spirit help us always to meet the surprises you have for us in faith and hope, trusting you will use them to draw us closer to yourself, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Reading Schedule for "On the Way to Bethlehem"

- December 1 Read Rome-Longing
- December 8 Read Jerusalem-Waiting
- December 15 Read Nazareth-Simplicity
- December 22 Read Bethlehem-A Place of Grace(pages 83-96)
- December 24 Read Bethlehem Humility(pages 96-107)
- December 29 Read Persia-A Place of Return



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