

ADVENT

==== *2014*

IN THE WAITING

01

IN THE WAITING

The division between old and new. While sometimes visible, other times the chasm is felt, pressing in on all sides, yet clearly unseen to those around us.

In the thin pages of Scripture, we find a pause between the pages of the Old and New Testament. For us it is as quick as the turn of the page. However, for the Jewish people, our flip of a page is one that took centuries. For some, this waiting was their entire lifetime. In a culture that had seen peril unlike most-to go from Egypt to the desert to the Promised Land-their obedience and faithfulness was met with the fulfillment of a promise. One promise fulfilled, but another still longing to become visible. The promise of a Savior. Having grown up hearing prophecies being passed down throughout the generations-and then there was silence.

400 YEARS OF SILENCE.

While I have never experienced a season of waiting of the same duration, I know that I have been in seasons that felt vast and endless. As we begin this advent season, how do I respond to the moments of waiting that God has placed in my life?

How do I respond to waiting in the mundane moments? The moments where I try to be faithful and obedient, yet it seems as if my Father is silent. Though He is not far off, how do I respond to the desert seasons that feel vast and endless. How do I respond when I am in moments of crisis, where I am crying out for breakthrough and hearing nothing.

As I look upon the blank page in my Bible symbolizing the 400-year gap, I find my heart encouraged. I'm encouraged that my dear God could even speak and strengthen my heart in the deafening silences. I'm encouraged that there is yet another moment in Scripture where my waiting is permitted. A moment where the Lord's love and patience is with me and leads me to the next season. A moment where I can grapple hard truths and know that it is perfectly fine to just be with Him. For all of these reasons, I have incredible hope and reason to celebrate.

Wherever you find yourself this Advent season, may you discover new facets of the Lord's heart and the truth he longs to reveal to you in the waiting.

**5 I WAIT FOR THE LORD,
I EXPECTANTLY WAIT,
AND IN HIS WORD DO I
HOPE.**

**6 I AM LOOKING AND
WAITING FOR THE LORD
MORE THAN
WATCHMEN FOR THE
MORNING, I SAY, MORE
THAN WATCHMEN FOR
THE MORNING.**

-PSALM 130:5-6 (AMP)

IN THE WAITING

Luke 1:5-25

IN THE WAITING

Luke 1:26-38

IN THE WAITING

Luke 1:39-45

IN THE WAITING

Psalm 130

PONDER: IN THE WAITING

Think through the following questions.

1. *If you were Zechariah, what would your response to the Lord be?*

2. *What are some of the waiting seasons you have found yourself in? In the past or in the present? Were these active or passive seasons? What is God wanting to teach you in this waiting season?*

3. *Reflect back to a time where God was silent in your life. What were some of the things that God taught you in that season?*

4. *Challenge: Think about the hardest time you had in your walk with the Lord. Now turn on worship music and adore him.*

EXPECTA- TIONS VS. EXPEC- TANCY

02

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Have you ever thought about Mary's expectations? As I look at the Christmas story and Mary's life, I often sit back and look at her with wonder. Here we have a teenage bride, excited to be married to her soon-to-be husband. She is busy prepping for the wedding as most brides do, and we find Joseph preparing for their life together, building their home.

I wonder what Mary expected of God. Did she look at the story of her ancestors and think that God only moved in extraordinary ways in the past? Was she expecting years of silence as her parents and grandparents encountered? What was her response to Zechariah's encounter with the angel and Elizabeth's pregnancy? I also wonder how the Shepherds' expectations were shifted on a starry night? They were looking forward to a peaceful night of watching sheep, yet found themselves in the company of a host of angels. And what about the wise men? They were expecting a king, royalty, someone they should know and revere in their spheres of knowledge and political influence. Instead, three men found themselves in a humble home worshipping at the feet of a small child.

There are countless times in my life where I hold fast to my expectations. I love order and hold a high standard to both myself and

others. There are many times when my expectations aren't met, and my world comes crashing down around me. Yet, when do our expectations cripple our lives, our community, and, most importantly, our walks with God? There have been many moments when I would see the way that God would move in the lives of others, and my heart would be encouraged and inspired. However, I found myself grappling with this question, "Why didn't God move in my life in the same way? What is it they had that I didn't?" After pondering for a while, I would come to a rather unsettling conclusion: I wouldn't let God move in that way in my life, because it didn't fit in line with my set of expectations. Because God is merciful and gracious, sometimes he lets us stay there. With my long list of expectations comes a big box. It's a box I try to put God in. However, God doesn't live in a box, and you just end up with a lot of cardboard!

What if, instead, God is a God of Expectancy? Expectancy leads us to hope. It reminds us that in the line of eternity God is good, his promises are true, and that lends my heart to a place of praise and thankfulness. I think Mary understood that God is indeed a God of Expectancy. She knew that her list of expectations of God were far from that of the plan he had for all of eternity. She could look at him and respond with the willingness to bear the seed of Jesus, the Christ.

**AND MARY SAID, “MY SOUL
MAGNIFIES THE LORD, AND
MY SPIRIT REJOICES IN GOD
MY SAVIOR, FOR HE HAS
LOOKED ON THE HUMBLE
ESTATE OF HIS SERVANT.
FOR BEHOLD, FROM NOW
ON ALL GENERATIONS WILL
CALL ME BLESSED; FOR HE
WHO IS MIGHTY HAS DONE
GREAT THINGS FOR ME,
AND HOLY IS HIS NAME.”**

-LUKE 1:46-49 (ESV)

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Luke 1:46-56

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Luke 1:57-66

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Luke 1:67-80

EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Proverbs 18:1

PONDER: EXPECTATIONS VS. EXPECTANCY

Think through the following questions.

1. *If you were Mary, how would you respond to God's request?*

2. *What are some of the expectations you place upon yourself, upon your community, and upon God? List some of these expectations out.*

3. *Are these expectations helping you or hindering you in moving forward into the fullness of your destiny? What is one place where the Lord longs to move in your life, but you haven't permitted him to go?*

4. *Challenge: Begin to release the Lord from the expectations you've placed upon him. Discover new levels of freedom and intimacy in your walk with the Lord.*

**EMMAN-
UEL GOD
WITH US**

03

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

Regardless of the seasons of waiting or the expectations we hold of our Father, there is one amazing fact. He is faithful, gentle, and kind. He is 100% of the time absolutely good and is the fulfiller of the promises he makes. He is the God who is with us. He is the Father who loved us so much that his love had to give all. Because of this, God took the nature of the highest form he created. He came in the form of man. He loved so much that he needed to have 10 fingers and toes on his birth certificate, he needed to get lost from his parents, he needed to experience the highs and lows of puberty, he needed to be rejected, abandoned, and scorned by those he knew. He had to know the fullness of humanity and deity, and become the solution to a problem man had created.

John 1:14 is literally translated in the Greek is, “And the Word became flesh, and tented among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only belonging of a father, full of grace and truth.”

THE GODHEAD TENTED AMONG US.

This is the incredible and unfathomable reality of the incarnation. To be fully known by the God who set the stars into motion, who split the seas, and calmed the storm, yet He knows

my heart.

He is Emmanuel, God with us. For the moments when I forget, when I cannot see or hear from him, and begin to lose hope, he is Emmanuel God with us. In the hospital room, the lawyer's office, or the doctor's exam room, he is God with us.

His faithfulness is true.

His heart is for you.

He is God with us.

**“AND THE WORD
BECAME FLESH, AND
TENTED AMONG US,
AND WE BEHELD HIS
GLORY, GLORY AS OF
AN ONLY BELONGING
OF A FATHER, FULL OF
GRACE AND TRUTH.”
-JOHN 1:14, GREEK
LITERAL TRANSLATION**

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

John 1:1-5

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

John 1:6-8

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

John 1:9-13

EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

John 1:14-18

PONDER: EMMANUEL GOD WITH US

Think through the following questions.

- 1. When are the times where God has shown himself faithful?*

- 2. As you reflect upon the incarnation, what surprises you?*

- 3. Challenge: As you wrap up the Christmas season, spend each night reflecting on God being with us and among us, while living through us. May we never lose the wonder of this thought.*

**O COME
LET US
ADORE
HIM**

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

It is through the incarnation that love meets its indescribable quality, that reverence finds the truest source, and our response is worship.

YET, WHY DOES THIS FEEL COMMONPLACE?

The above is a question that I seem to have asked myself and one that we all face from time to time. It seems these are the moments where fascination with his presence has dwindled, and we can't seem to remember the last time we encountered the Father's love. The words on the pages of Scripture no longer convict and marinate the heart, but rather remain lifeless on a page, solely doctrines and principles.

When I find myself in this place, I remind myself that worship is sacrifice. It is a moment where I lose my thoughts and take on his thoughts. It is where I find myself lost in his presence and intentionally spend myself upon him. It is a pouring out of lavish love, unlike that of any other. My soul finds the one it loves and is willing to waste my life for him.

With one encounter of his love, my life was forever changed. One encounter of his presence infused my life with hope and allowed me to love him with a greater measure. In the

moments where I feel stuck or when the Christmas story seems commonplace, I remind myself of the words of Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Cultivating his presence is what my heart and soul desire. There is no greater aim to my life and no greater reason for my existence. I remind myself of Anna, the widow in the Christmas story. At the moment, I am 26. Anna, most likely a widow by my age, proceeds to serve the Lord as a prophetess until the age of eighty-four. Anna was devout and didn't tire. She understood that worship was sacrifice. She stayed in the temple day and night, worshipping, and praying, and knew that the redemption had come that she has been waiting for.

For the manger, our response is worship.

For the incarnation, our response is worship.

He alone is worthy. He will always be worthy.

**“AND THE SHEPHERDS
RETURNED, GLORIFYING
AND PRAISING GOD FOR
ALL THEY HAD HEARD
AND SEEN, AS IT HAD
BEEN TOLD THEM.”**

-LUKE 2:20 (ESV)

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Luke 2:1-7

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Luke 2:8-21

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Luke 2:22-35

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Luke 2:36-38

PONDER: O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Think through the following questions.

1. Why do I struggle to worship?

2. When was the last time I looked at the Christmas story?

3. Put on your favorite worship playlist, grab a journal and a Bible, and spend time resting in his presence.

"I pray that you find the wonder of the Christmas story again this season. May you never tire of the worthiness and magnificance of Jesus. He is always worth it."

Melissa