

Advent Day 2

Joy Worth the Wait

Hey Lifegate. My name is Connor and welcome to day two of our advent devotional. I am so honored and excited to reflect and celebrate the joy we have, and the joy Jesus came to bring when he was born in that trough over 2000 years ago.

Now, we live in what many people call an “instant gratification” culture. If you want groceries, you open up an app and they arrive on your step within hours. If you want to enjoy a show or a movie that you haven’t seen in a while, you need only select from the cornucopia of streaming platforms to get your entertainment fix in a flash. If you want affirmation, you can post a photo on your instagram or Facebook and immediately have your self worth affirmed by friends and strangers alike. Or as my favorite daytime television payday loan commercial put it throughout my childhood...”It’s my money, and I need it now”. Who knew JG Wentworth would have been prophetic about our cultural moment?

However, what have we lost in the midst of quick-fix culture? Patience, to be sure; but more importantly, we have lost the joy that comes on the other side of waiting. I was fortunate enough to live most of my childhood in an era where if I wanted to watch my favorite show, I had to wait until it aired on Sunday evening. Anxiously waiting all week, letting the tension build in my mind, growing in eager anticipation of what the show would

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bring, and then... all at once, like a raging river busting through a dam, joy and relief would come bursting forth as I would sit on my couch, popcorn in hand, and enjoy what I had waited so long to have.

While delayed gratification is an anomaly to our modern sensibilities, it was one of the defining realities of a 1st century Israelite in the middle east. Good Jewish boys and girls would have spent their whole lives, listening, meditating, and memorizing the stories of a promised future deliverer. An anointed one, or who they would have called Mashiyach, or we would call, Messiah. A king, who would establish God's righteousness and justice in the land again. And not only those 1st century Jewish kids, but their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents going back over 40 generations. Imagine thousands of years of eager, desperate, heart wrenching waiting for a promise that seemed impossible given their current circumstances. As far back as the garden in Eden, the Israelites were given a glimpse in to the future, however. Right after Adam and Eve took the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and sin entered the world, God began his redemptive work. Long before God's people were even a thought, God spoke to that wretched serpent and said this in Gen 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

From that fateful day in the garden onward, all of creation has been groaning (Rom 8) in anticipation for a deliverer who would restore humanity and free us from our oppression to sin and death. As history progressed and God chose a people, whom he called Israel, to be the agents of his restorative work he pinpointed certain characters and made astonishing promises to them. Here's a poetic reflection on the promise God made king David from Psalm 89 "I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'

It was on the basis of this very promise, that God would establish a king from the line of David who would reign forever, that every Israelite eagerly waited. Through trials, tribulations, exile, good kings, bad kings, foreign rulers, and Roman invasions, God's people held on to the hope that their chosen one, the Messiah, would come to rule and reign.

Now, imagine, you are one of those little jewish boys or girls who has heard the stories. You have heard the prophecies and the promises. Your ancestors as far back as the beginning of time itself have been waiting for a king, a deliverer, a snake crusher. And then... in the dirt outside of a worthless town, in a powerless region, from a family of nobody's, is born a boy. A boy who fulfilled every promise. A boy for whom people travelled from the farthest stretches of the world to come worship. A

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boy that angels sang for and stars shined brighter for. Can you imagine the joy that would so fill your heart from that type of waiting?

You don't get that type of joy through instant gratification. The joy that Jesus brought and is bringing is forged in the crucible of longing. True joy, comes from waiting, and the hope that comes along with it. Reflecting on the return of Jesus the apostle Peter put it this way "Praise be to the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a LIVING HOPE" this hope, he goes on to say is an inheritance kept in heaven for us until Jesus returns again, and in all this we "greatly rejoice" (1 Pet 1:3-6)

As we wrap up for today I want to encourage you with this final prayer. And it is actually the first verse from my favorite advent hymn of all time. Read this ancient hymn as a prayer to our God, listen to it on Spotify, or just hum it to yourself.

*"Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart."*