

God Has Not Forgotten You: Combating Lies During Seasons of Waiting

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Hello friends and welcome to this session of our Advent retreat where we get to talk all about waiting. Advent is about waiting, and the people of Israel waited centuries for the coming of the Messiah. So, what can we learn from how they waited in joyful hope, both as a people and as individuals? That's what I hope to offer you for reflection today. And so let's start with prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord God, we worship you and we wait for you with great longing. Lord, you know all the little ways that we are in seasons of waiting right now. You see the desire of our hearts, and so God, we just offer those to you in full trust today. Please bless us and our desires, orient them to your will for our lives. And Lord, may we always remember that every ounce of our longing, every season of waiting is just pointing us to where what we ultimately desire, which is fullness in heaven with you. Lord, we want beatitude and so we fix our gaze on you this day. We ask you to be with us, to hold our hands and to lead us closer to you. We ask all this through the intercession of Mother Mary, amen. In name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Waiting Moments In Our Life

So like I mentioned, advent is a season that requires waiting. And, you know, the Israelites were waiting for the Messiah and we get to enjoy the reign of the Messiah. And so now we, as a people, wait for him to come again. But also our daily lives are filled with waiting. Of course on the micro scale, you know? We're waiting all the time, in lines, we're waiting for test results, we're waiting for someone to make a decision or for ourselves to make a decision.

There's all sorts of micro waiting in our lives. And then there's the deeper waiting, probably the macro waiting, the long seasons of waiting in our lives that really are tests of faith where we really get to choose to trust the Lord no matter what. And these are the ones that usually weigh heavier on our hearts, right? Just waiting for a dream to be realized, waiting for a spouse, waiting for children, waiting for reconciliation in a relationship. These are those things that really allow us to enter into the mystery of waiting and longing. And so I thought today that we could look at four common lies that the enemy throws at all of us when we're in a season of waiting like this.

And we can look at how the people of Israel, again, both on a communal scale and an individual scale, dealt with that lie in their lives as they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Okay, so the first common lie that we are told when we are in a season of waiting is that I am running out of time. This is such a common one. I literally had to battle this lie just earlier this week with a circumstance in our life. And I had that pressure on my chest of I'm running out of time, I'm running out of time for this thing to come to fruition. And so anytime

I feel that way of I'm running out of time, I know that's not of the Lord because I know that His timing and His way are perfect, but it's one that we all face, right?

Faced With A Lie During Waiting

And so someone in our history who also faced this lie was Abraham. Abraham was promised by God to be the father of nations when he was childless and passed childbearing age alongside his wife Sarah. And yet God promised the impossible anyway. And so Abraham had to hope against hope. And this is why the New Testament authors hail Abraham as the father of faith because he had to believe that God could do the absolute impossible. Now, of course, Abraham was not perfect and we know the infamous story of what he did in the face of this lie, I'm running out of time. He took matters into his own hands, right? So God promises him an heir. It doesn't happen immediately.

So what does Abraham start to do? He starts to panic a little bit. Well, God promised and I believe him, but maybe I'm supposed to, like, help things along a little bit, right? And so that's when he had a child by Sarah's maid servant, Hagar. And that was not in God's plan and that was not what he wanted for Abraham and Sarah. And so how often do we do that in our own lives, in our own seasons of waiting, right? We have this desire and at first we're like all in on giving it to the Lord and trusting Him to make it happen and come through. But then time passes and we start to get a little squirrely and we get a little nervous and we say, okay, well this hasn't happened yet, so maybe I'm supposed to like do something just to force it along a little bit. Even something that is outside what I know is in God's law or in God's call on my life.

And so we're not so different from Abraham. Now, God and His mercy and kindness, right, fulfilled His promise to Abraham and Sarah anyway, through giving them a son, Isaac, and Abraham did indeed become the father of many nations. And so we look to Abraham as an example, both in his humanity and his weakness, which we experience as well, and also in his getting back up and choosing to believe God anyway, and choosing to say, you know what? I'm not running out of time because the Lord will help this happen as He wills. And we see this maturity and faith in Abraham later, right, when God puts him to the tests and invites him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At this point, Abraham had walked with the Lord long enough and his faith had grown so much that he had confidence that God could even raise Isaac from the dead. So we just get to see Abraham's progression of faith, which is just such a beautiful encouragement for us. And may God grow and mature our faith in the same way the longer we walk with Him.

Second Lie: Waiting Fruitless

Okay, the second lie that we are tempted to believe in seasons of waiting is that the waiting is fruitless, right? It's wasted time. Lord, why has this thing not yet come to pass because in it I could serve you better, or I could reach more people, or I could fulfill this call, this mission that you've put on my life. So we're tempted to think there's nothing good that's going to come from this. It's literally just time is passing and I'm missing it. I'm missing out on what this is. And so somebody in Israel's history who experienced a similar lie was Joseph.

Now Joseph, you know, was Jacob's most beloved son, and he was, you know, entrusted with the beautiful robe, right, of many colors. And so in their jealousy, his brothers first wanted to kill him and then resorted to just selling him into slavery to the Egyptians. Now this could have already been, you know, distressing to Joseph, obviously, right? But then even more is that he prospers in Egypt and is trusted with being the head of Potiphar's house. Now, Joseph is later framed by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison without real cause. This was an unjust thing that happened to Joseph. And so he sat in prison for two years.

And so we can relate, sort of, to this in Joseph's life is where do you feel like God was calling you to or that God has been preparing you for, and then all of a sudden you're just like thrown in the pit, right? You're thrown into prison. You can't do any of those things that you feel like the Lord has been leading you to in prayer, in your life experience, in preparation, that can be very discouraging. But what Joseph did is he didn't lose heart. And that time of waiting in prison was not fruitless. That was actually a time where he increased in reliance upon the Lord.

The Lord continued to sharpen both spiritual and earthly skills that helped Joseph fulfill his mission. And without that time in prison, everything that came to pass later would not have come to fruition as so. And so our seasons of waiting can actually bear great fruit in our lives when we accept them without kicking and screaming, right? And so this is a call to us in the life of Joseph and, of course, in the life of Israel as a whole, that the time of waiting is not fruitless. God is still working, he's still moving in our lives, even if it's not on our timeline or if it's not in the ways we thought, or expected or even wanted. We can see that our seasons of waiting are not for not. The Lord is still preparing us. He's refining us. He's decreasing our self-reliance and increasing our reliance on him. So we don't have to be afraid, or disheartened or even annoyed in these seasons of waiting because we can be confident that the Lord is still using them.

Third Lie: God Has Forgotten Me

Okay, the third lie that we are tempted to believe in seasons of waiting is that God has forgotten me. This one is particularly painful, especially if your season of waiting involves watching other people around you obtain that for which you're waiting and hoping, right? So like watching your friends get married or have babies while you're waiting for those, or watching your friends adult children, you know, find their vocations and be active in their faith while yours are, you know, fallen away or struggling. It's, this lie is difficult to combat when it seems like God has remembered everybody else but us. Here's how we combat that. We follow the example of the Israelites. Now remember, while Israel is waiting for the Messiah, while Israel is waiting for these monumental promises that God has made them, they are going through it. I think of the Israelites in exile, right?

I mean, at that point things could not look bleaker. You know, they were away from the temple, the place of their worship. They were families were separated. They as a nation were separated, and then they were fighting with each other, and they were living as exiles, so they weren't experiencing the abundance of provision. And so things looked pretty dire. And so I think to combat these lies, we can join our hearts with theirs, and I think the best place to do this is the Psalms. We can read the Psalms whenever we're battling this lie of God has forgotten me. Because in the Psalms, we see the Israelites say the exact same thing. They say,

where are you, oh, Lord? How long are you going to hide your face from us? You've turned your back on us and our enemies are laughing about it, right? So the Psalms are so real in their honesty, but also what the Psalms do is they don't stop there. They don't end there. There is always the but or there is always the and or there is always the yet. But I will praise your name and you will come through for us, yet I know that you are my God and you will not abandon me. So the Psalms are human in their honesty and hopeful in their confidence in God. And so in spite all of this waiting that for them was endless, both they're waiting in exile and their waiting for the Messiah. They didn't know what the end date was. They didn't know when God would come to save them. And yet they maintain their faith.

So the Israelites are a beautiful example for us of these seasons, especially these long seasons of waiting where it's particularly painful because it feels like, Lord, have you remembered, do you see me? Do you know that this is on my heart? And we see both through the Psalms, we see in the coming of Jesus that God's answer is, I will never forget you. As He says to the prophet Isaiah, I have engraven in you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are ever before me. And even if a mother forgets her nursing infant, I will never forget you. And that is God's promise to us. And that is what we get to cling to in this longing, in this season of waiting.

The Final Lie

Okay, the fourth and final lie that I'd like to talk about that we all combat in seasons of waiting, is that this is not how I thought my life would be. And perhaps the follow-up thought. And this version is not good, right? Okay, so we can be honest with the Lord and say, this isn't how I thought my life would be. The lie there is the afterthought. This version is not good. And so here's something that we combat, I think just as humans, especially the longer we live life, because we just come to see that things don't always work out the way we thought they would. Or, you know, maybe we had dreams that aren't going to come to fruition in the way that we thought they would. And this is really painful. And what we can be tempted to believe in the face of this reality is that no good can come from this. Lord, this was not the plan. This was not my very good and very holy desire for my life. I feel like the rug has been ripped out from under me. And how could you possibly bring anything good from the way things have turned out? And I think of a couple people from the history of Israel in this.

The first is Ruth. So Ruth was married and her husband, along with her brother-in-law and father-in-law, were killed when she was still very young. And she was in a foreign land apart from her people. And it could have looked pretty hopeless in that situation, right? You know, you think of a young woman excited to be married, excited to have a family, being incorporated into a large extended family, and then suddenly all of that goes away. But Ruth remains faithful to her mother-in-law, Naomi. She remains faithful in the post that God has her at and in the season. And so she wakes up every day and just does what needs to be done. She remains faithful in the small things. And we see that eventually, you know, her waiting does come to an end. She marries Boaz and she is brought into the lineage of Christ Jesus, which is such a high honor, right? And so her waiting was not in vain. And even though her life probably took a turn that she never expected and probably never wanted, what we see in the life of Ruth is that it does end well. God does bring good from it.

So if you're in a season of where you're just like, yeah, this is totally not how I saw things going, and I don't see where I go from here, or how I go from here, or what steps I take, or, God, how can I honor you in this season? Well, we can honor Him by waking up every day, by loving Him, by loving the people who are in our life and by remaining faithful to Him. The second person that comes to mind is, of course, our Blessed Mother. And so we see that her life may not have gone the way that she initially thought. You know, she may not have predicted that the Archangel Gabriel would come and propose to her the incarnation of God to save the world. And yet she knew that God works all things for the good of those who love Him. And so she went forth in confidence. And, of course, this version, God's version for her life was very, very good. And so we can turn to Our Lady if we're feeling discouraged, or if we're feeling discontent, or wondering if God can bring any good out of these long seasons of waiting.

And so friends, we see that in the people of Israel and all these individuals we've talked about, the underlying theme here is trust. We are called to be like children. We are called to be honest like children, you know, and tell the Lord how we're thinking, and feeling, and what does weigh heavy on our hearts. But we're also called to be like children in that we just know He'll take care of it. We'll know that He's got it, that He's not unaware, that He has not forgotten us, that He sees our longing and desire, and that He knows what is best for us. And so we just get to put our hands in His, and we get to walk alongside Him knowing that He will always fulfill this longing that we have in the waiting, which of course is ultimately in heaven.

Closing Prayer

So let's pray together now. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus, we long for you and we await your coming. Lord, we love you and we want to live in the joy of knowing that we are not forgotten, that our seasons of waiting are not fruitless, that we're not running out of time, and that your plan is far better for our lives than anything we could ever construct on our own. So Jesus, we just place our whole hearts and our whole lives in your sacred heart once again today, knowing that you will always take care of us, that you'll always bring about the greatest good, and that you'll always fulfill the longing that we have in the waiting. Thank you for becoming one of us. Thank you for showing us your great love. We ask all these things through the intercession of Mother Mary. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, friends, I hope this encourages you in your season of waiting. I'll be praying for you, and thank you for spending this time with me. God bless you.