

Understanding Seasons of Waiting & Worshiping In Its Midst

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Hello, let's go ahead and start.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen. Oh, dear Jesus, we asked during this Advent season that you are going to increase our longing, our desire, our hunger for You. We thank you for the opportunity to have this season of preparing our hearts for the memory of You coming, but also for an increase within our own hearts, a rebirth of a recognition of Your presence, of Your desire to dwell so deeply within us and for us to be able to acknowledge Your presence within our lives. And we look to the Blessed Mother and asked for her prayers in a particular way, the one who is most famous for one yes, but that her yes was one in a million. Every breath, every action that she took in her day was a yes to you. And we asked that she will pray with us, that she will pray for us as we pray.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Hello, my name is Katie Hartfiel and I am the Content Coordinator for the Women's Program, She Shall Be Called Woman, which is put out by the ministry Paradisus Dei, which is most well-known for its men's program, That Man is You!. And I'm so excited to have this opportunity to share with you over the season of Advent as we are preparing and waiting.

All About Waiting

And of course, Advent is all about waiting. And whenever I think of this idea of waiting, I remember growing up in the late 1900s and this time, you know, my kids I try to explain to them and they will never fully understand I think what it was to wait, what it was to wait, right? And I think about how we would have to go to the video store in order to rent a movie, right? To be able to see the next movie that had come out on video we would wait for a month for it to come out and for us to be able to go and see it.

We would take a picture and you would have to fill up your whole roll of 24 pictures and then bring it to the store and wait for several days to go back and get it to then see after it was developed if your eyes were closed or not. All of these periods of waiting that were built into the fabric of our life.

Of course, the biggest change for us was in 1994 when the internet became public, when it was something that was all of a sudden within our homes, within our daily life where these different areas of communication were shortened. You could send electronic mail to someone and they could have it delivered to them in instant. And of course the internet has changed so much about how we wait as a culture, and of course it's going to change the way we think; of course, it's going to change our expectations that we have really become a vending machine

culture. It changes everything about how we run our day, how we've become so much busier, I think, than humanity has ever been before.

Waiting For The Gates Of Heaven To Be Unlocked

And I think it would be silly for us to say that this hasn't overflowed into our expectations of who God is, of how God operates, that of course if we've been rewired and we can think of our lives as being so different, then of course our interior life is going to also be affected as well. And with that we are so thankful of course, that the Church and her wisdom has always known that we need this season of remembering what it is to long for something, the season of waiting. And in our world this has become even more necessary, this season of Advent, to remember what it is to starve, to need something so badly, but to have to wait in anticipation.

When we look at the Old Testament, when we look at the scriptures in fact what we find is the people who knew what it was to wait. And oftentimes we forget when we're reading the Old Testament, where we're reading about the longing of the hearts of God's people, we forget what this must have been like for them because we know the end of the story, right? When I was in high school, my mom and I went through this phase where we really loved murder mysteries. And so I would get one from the bookstore, I'd read it, I'd pass it on to her, she would do the same.

And my mom did something that drove me crazy. She would take the book when I would hand it to her, and she would sit down and read the last chapter first, which of course changes the whole way that you experience the rest of the story, right? But really, this is kind of our experience when we read the scriptures, when we read about God's people who are waiting for so long for the Messiah to come because we know that Jesus came and that He saved us.

So I want to take a second to really enter into that season of waiting. And of course we know Adam and Eve in the garden, there was the fall. And from that moment on, the gates of heaven were locked. The gates of heaven were locked. And God promises that He's going to send a Savior, He's going to send a Messiah to come and to save the people and God's people are waiting for the appropriate time for the fullness of that time.

So, what this means is, for generations and generations, for thousands of years, people were dying and the gates of heaven were locked. I want you to imagine that for a second, that someone that you love dies and you know for a fact that they are not going to a better place because the gates of heaven are locked. That you yourself are on your deathbed and you know that you are not going to heaven, that you are going to await, imprisoned waiting for the Messiah to come to set God's people free to open the gates of heaven that we could be able to be with Him in that moment. What would that feel like?

God's people never forgot that they were starving for the Savior. They never forgot that they needed the Messiah, and that without Him they were lost. Sometimes I think that we forget what it is to long and to starve and to hunger for the salvation of who Jesus is. And all of a sudden, you know, in this story, in this book, there's this young woman that no one knows in a nowhere town and an angel appears to her and asks her a question. And I like to think that in this moment all of creation is holding its breath, that all of the souls that have come before that all of the angels are waiting to hear her answer, "Yes" "Yes" that the Messiah is coming.

The Story of Abraham

And that is what we are meant to enter into in the season of Advent, this promise of the Lord within our own lives and this spirit of anticipation and not taking for granted who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

I want to look at one of these very specific stories in the Old Testament, a story of waiting, and there's so many that we could look at of course, but I would like to look specifically today at the story of Abraham. And instead of looking at the story of Abraham actually in the Old Testament, uniquely, I would really like to look at what St. Paul says as he recounts the story of Abraham in the book of Hebrews. And this comes from Hebrews chapter 11 and it says, *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was to go. And by faith he received the power to generate, even though he was past the normal age, and Sarah herself was sterile, for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy."*

I love that line. We know this story and we know it well, right? That Abraham and Sarah have been waiting their whole lives and anticipating and hoping that they would be able to have a child, that they've had the agony of their infertility, that they have known what it is to long and to desire to have an ache within their hearts and to live within that ache. And they're at a point now, of course, where they have probably given up and accepted, you know, that they are never going to have children.

But it was that waiting actually that made this a miracle, a miracle. That if Abraham and Sarah were, you know, 21 years old and they immediately have a child, that part of the story probably wouldn't have even made it into this book. That it's the waiting and that longing that makes the appreciation, that makes the miraculous gift of who Isaac is something that we still talk about all of these years later. And this was because within their longing and within their waiting, they worshiped, right? Because Abraham thought that the one who made the promise was trustworthy.

And it goes on, it says, *"By faith Abraham, he offered up Isaac and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son of whom it was said through Isaac, descendants will bear your name. And he reasoned that God was able to even rise from the dead and he received Isaac back as a symbol."*

Am I really willing to surrender over every part of my life in ways that I don't understand, in ways that I'm afraid, in ways that are confusing? Am I willing to give it all over to the Lord, trusting that the one who made the promise will be trustworthy? And you see, I've been thinking about this idea of worship a lot lately, and I've been thinking about the idea of waiting and worship and the ways that these things are intertwined and this comes to life so powerfully in the story of Abraham and Sarah, of this longing of God giving this gift and then God saying, *"Are you willing to give it back to me?"*

God is Asking For Sacrifice

And I heard a couple of years ago, a line that has stuck with me in a personal way, in my own prayer really profoundly, and that is that worship requires sacrifice. That when we look at this book and we look at the Old Testament, what we see is sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice. Sacrifice of animals, sacrifice of crops. And when you think of the word sacrifice, what it means is that it's going to hurt, that it's going to be painful, that it's going to mean giving up something or being willing to give it away even and especially in a way that we're not exactly excited about. If you're heading into church and you find a penny in the parking lot and that's what you throw in the basket when it's passed around, it's not a sacrifice, right? When we give from what we have left over, it's not a sacrifice. If we expect to give and to get what we want out of it, it's not a sacrifice.

And what we see in these stories in the Old Testament is God asking for sacrifice, not because He Himself needs blood, not because He Himself needs the first fruits of crops, but because He knows we need it. That if we desire to be holy, if we desire to be selfless, if we desire to know Him, and especially for Him to be able to bring about the incredible plans that He has in our life that are better than our dreams, then we have to be willing to sacrifice. We have to be willing to let go, to be able to say, I thought that the one who made the promise was trustworthy.

And so my brothers and sisters, what is it for you? What is the Lord asking you to surrender your life, to hand over to Him, to let go of control and to say, "I trust you. I trust you Lord with my children. I trust you Lord with my marriage. I trust you with my vocation. I trust you with my future not knowing what it's going to look like. I trust you with this illness that I don't understand." The illness maybe within your own life or within the life of somebody that you know or someone that you love. "I trust you Lord in the suffering." I trust you with these things maybe that you've been holding onto for a long time with certain sins, certain temptations, maybe even certain addictions, maybe things that you have been holding onto like old wounds. Old wounds that maybe you don't even know who you are without them.

Unforgiveness for other people in your life or maybe areas that you haven't been able to forgive yourself, ways that you have been punishing yourself for so long because you're afraid if you let go of this certain thing and the shame that you have attached to it, even though you've gone to confession, but you're still beating yourself up for it, you're still weeping about it, you're still angry with yourself because you're afraid that if you let it go somehow you're dishonoring the Lord.

What is the sacrifice that God is asking you to place on the altar? Those areas of self-reliance, those areas of control that God is saying, "Will you give it to Me? Will you trust Me in the season of Advent? Do you believe that I am trustworthy?" Pope Benedict, when he became the Holy Father he said, "Do not be afraid of Christ because He takes nothing away and He gives you everything." And the areas that we actually are clinging to so strongly are probably the areas where the Lord says, "If you trust me with it, I will be able to do greater things than you could ever imagine."

That maybe those are the areas, and most likely those are the areas that He's saying, "Will you bring it to the altar? Will you offer it as a sacrifice because it's better for you? Because I

have greater plans in store for you." St. Paul, as he continues to say this, he says, "So, it was that there came forth from one man himself as good as dead." which is maybe not very sensitive, right?

Yes, we know Abraham was old. "But it came forth from Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars and as countless as the sands on the sea shore and all of those died in faith. And these generations, they did not receive what had been promised, but they saw it and they greeted it from afar and they acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth. For those who speak, thus show that they are seeking a homeland. But if they had been thinking about the land from which they had come, they would've had the opportunity to return there. But now they desire a better homeland, a heavenly one, and therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, and He has prepared a city for them."

You see what we see in these generations that came after Abraham was that generation after generation, they died, and they died waiting for a promised land, they they then died waiting for a savior. But because of that waiting and because of that longing, the desire for heaven grew in their heart, and that this is the desire for each of us and all of these areas that we are clinging to in our lives and these areas that God is calling to sacrifice He's saying, "Will you allow Me to make that desire for heaven even stronger? That desire for you and I because if you hold onto it," as it says here, "If you're thinking about all of these things, even the good things in our life, if we're holding to them too closely, then we're going to miss what is better, the desire for heaven and that desire for heaven, even for the people that we love so deeply in our lives that God says, "If you surrender them to Me, if you bring them to Me, if we come to it together, I will deliver you all there if you are willing to get out of My way and to allow Me to take control."

The Most Painful Sacrifice of All

You see when we look at this story, what we see is that Advent reminds us of the people that came before Christ, but it also most powerfully reminds us of the one who was willing to sacrifice His Son within the plan, the most painful and powerful sacrifice of all, which is the sacrifice of the Lord sending Jesus, sending Jesus to shed His blood in order for us to be set free, in order for us to be in heaven with Him forever.

That this is true worship when we bring all of these things to the altar, to the sacrifice, but when we unite it so the sacrifice that came once and for all, that baby that was born, that was born in order to come and to bring the message of the kingdom and ultimately to suffer and to die, to open the gates of heaven and to answer the deepest longing, the deepest waiting, the deepest desire of our hearts that this is what we enter into in the waiting of Advent.

Closing Prayer

Let's pray. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for the gift of your Son, for the gift of this time, and we open up our hearts as an altar to you this day, and we ask you to take them, those things that are sitting at the surface of our day that need to be surrendered to You, the things that lie in the corners, maybe where we don't even want anyone to see. Take it all. Take it all Lord Jesus, because we believe that the one who made the promise is trustworthy.

We love you so much Jesus and we want to love you more. Mother Mary, we ask once again that you'll pray for us, that you'll intercede for us the one who watched her Son be offered as that sacrifice, the one who knew without understanding, without knowing what it would look like that you were trustworthy.

Pray with us in this time of waiting, in this time of worship, Mother Mary, and walk with us giving us the courage to truly say yes. Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.