

Hope: When Waiting Feels Like Wasting

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- [0:00] Well, Merry Christmas, y'all. It is the beginning of the Christmas season, and we are very excited for that. I enjoyed that Advent presentation on hope from our children.
- And that's what we're going to talk about. We're going to talk about hope. But before we talk about that, how many of y'all spent some money this weekend? Anybody spent some money on Black Friday?
- Yes. We had a few hands. Loud and proud. There you go. I did, too. How many of you got to spend some more money tomorrow? It's Cyber Monday. Don't forget, Giving Tuesday is coming.
- That's when you're supposed to charitably give, not just spend on yourself, right? All right. Look, in this economy, I'm going to be honest with y'all, I try to save up as many purchases as I possibly can for this weekend because the sales that you find often allow you to purchase things that it's hard other times to purchase.
- If you see a TV in my house, I probably got it for a steal on Black Friday at some point. That's just how it works. I didn't knock anybody over for it.
- [1:07] That doesn't happen as much anymore, thankfully. That's one good thing the internet has done for us. It's helped cut down on some of those crazy crowds over this shopping weekend. Listen, it's not necessarily all a bad thing.
- Sometimes it's allowing you to do something for someone that you would have a hard time otherwise doing. It's like I love you enough to buy a gift. I just don't love you enough to pay full price. You know what I mean?
- But that's not it. It's smart shopping. And so that's all right. But then, I tell you what, this has got to be Amazon's biggest time of the year, doesn't it?
- We drove down to Louisiana. We spent the holidays with my, well, the holiday, I guess, with my parents down there. And we drove back. And I don't know how many Amazon trucks we passed on the way back home.
- And we passed them because I was in a hurry to get home. But look, this is the time of year when the gifts start rolling in. And then what happens? They get wrapped.
- [2:09] And then they go under the tree. And then it's the worst time ever for children because they sit there and they look at the gifts.
- You can't open them yet. You got to wait until Christmas, right? By the way, that's Austin and Bo there. So, long time ago. In case you couldn't tell.
- But that's what happens. The season of hope starts. And they're hoping that what is in those boxes matches what they were hoping to get for Christmas. And they won't find out until Christmas morning unless you open one on Christmas Eve.
- Does anybody open a present on Christmas Eve? Yeah, look at you. All right, good. I grew up with that tradition. We carry it on. We do like one present. You can, whoever finds the pickle ornament on the tree.

We have a green pickle that I hide on the tree. And whoever finds that first gets to open the first present on Christmas Eve. That has nothing to do with the sermon. But now you know something. Anyway, like those kids waiting and watching the presents under the tree.

[3:15] We all find ourselves waiting and watching for someone, the greatest gift of all, to come back and take us home to heaven.

And that is a theme throughout the Bible. And it's a theme through the Christmas season. It's really what it's all about is hope.

For generations, God's people were waiting and watching for the Messiah. And on another note, he came and many of them missed it.

But this hope, this anticipation, waiting and watching is what this season is all about. And that's the first theme of Advent.

So let's dive into it. The gift of Christmas is waiting. The gift of Christmas is waiting. Now, that doesn't sound all that fun.

[4:15] None of us love to wait. I don't know how many of y'all have ever had to experience a DMV. Look, y'all are in, you're so spoiled here in this small town. We can get things done down at the county offices without much weight usually.

But how many of you have lived in a bigger city and you had to go stand in line at a DMV? Did you enjoy that? Was it just filling you with a rich, full experience? I don't think so.

So DMV is no fun, right? And I feel bad for the people that work there. They have to put up with people who have waited in line all that time. We don't like to wait. One of my cardinal sins I will express to you right now, if you haven't already figured it out, is impatience.

I have a really hard time sitting and waiting. And I'm trying to make my driving not reflect that quite as much. Anyway. But let's go to Isaiah chapter 9.

And let's look at a few verses here. Isaiah chapter 9. While you're turning there, we're kicking off this Christmas series called The Gift is Waiting. And today, we're talking about hope.

[5:23] Today, we're talking about hope. If you're going to give it our title, if you've got a bulletin in front of you, if you were handed one on the way in or you picked one up, they're in the back.

It says, when waiting feels like wasting. Has anybody ever experienced that? You don't have to raise your hand right now. You're turning your pages or you're opening up the Bible app on your phone and that's fine.

But listen, sometimes waiting can feel like wasting. So let's look at Isaiah chapter 9 in verse 2. I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. For a child is born to us.

Man, what great words. A son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders and he will be called. Let's say it together. Wonderful Counselor.

[6:22] Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. Can we say those again together? Ready? Those four. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God.

Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. His government and his peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.

That was written, folks, about 700 years before Jesus' birth. You think they had to wait? You think there was a period of anticipation?

Of waiting? Of sitting there looking at the presence under the tree waiting for them to be opened? That's kind of the same vibe that we get from this. This wonderful gift is coming from God.

But it's not here yet. We have to wait. And so, we know, in hindsight, God's timing was perfect.

[7 : 21] It was the perfect time at the right time at the best time Jesus came. But he gave them this magnificent promise.

And then there was this massive pause before it actually happened. But God was working the whole time. There's a principle there.

While we're waiting, God is working. Can we say that together? While we're waiting, God is working. Y'all got to wake up a little bit. Here we go. Everybody, reach your hands up in the air like this.

Kind of wave them at me. This is a wave offering to God. I'm kidding. We don't get into all that. Let's say it. Ready? While we're waiting, God is working.

One more time. While we're waiting, God is working. We could say it this way. Look at the screen, would you? Waiting isn't wasted when God is working in the waiting.

[8 : 21] You probably have to read that again to understand what it's saying. Waiting isn't wasted when God is working in the waiting. So while we are waiting, we can be assured that God is working.

The gift is waiting. So this waiting is not a waste. Well, let's dive into this. Number one, if you're taking notes, you can fill it in in your bulletin. The pause has a purpose.

Remember, there was this promise from God, and then there was a pause. But there was a purpose behind the pause. So let's dive into this. Waiting isn't wasted when God is working in the waiting.

Why? Because there is a purpose in the pause. Let's look at Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 26. I have it up on the screen. Lamentations 3, 26.

It is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. It is good to wait. Why? Because waiting builds hope.

[9 : 28] And hope builds faith. Because hope will someday be realized. Hope will be seen. Hope will be fulfilled.

When it's hope in God. Look, I can hope that the Cowboys will win all the rest of their games and win their first Super Bowl in 30 years.

But that hope may not come to reality. Right? It's not even funny anymore. It's just been so long. When we put our hope in some things, in most things, there's a strong possibility it will let us down.

When we put our hope in God, that will bear out. That will come to pass. And so we can hope and then we wait during that season of hope.

So it's good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. But y'all, everything in our culture is teaching us against this principle. It's leading us the other direction.

[10 : 35] It's saying there's no reason to wait. You should have it all here and now. And you and I fall prey to that. We try to jump on every possible way to make our lives a little faster.

Remember, cut down the wait time. We'll give it any number of names or justification. Like, well, we're just trying to be more expeditious.

Or we're just trying to be good stewards of our time. And yes, there's nothing wrong with being good steward of your time. But sometimes it's okay to wait. That's a hard thing to wrap my head around.

And I suspect some of you. But it's good for us. The Bible teaches us be still sometimes. Sit.

I think I shared with you some weeks ago that I started a principle based on a dear friend that I have. He's a pastor of First Baptist Lorena, Texas, Heath Kirkwood. And he taught me this principle of silent prayer.

[11:39] And that doesn't mean, howdy friend, my friend came to visit today, the wasp. He always comes every sermon. So if you see one flying around, just leave it alone.

My friend taught me this principle of sitting quietly in prayer. And that doesn't mean that I'm necessarily even praying in my head to God. It's just sitting, emptying my heart, emptying my mind of all the distractions that will keep me from really locking in and listening to God's voice.

And just waiting on God. And so every night, every Wednesday night, I should say, when we have our pastor's life group. By the way, shameless plug for our life groups. We've got Monday night men's group.

We've got two Tuesday night groups going. We've got our Wednesday night pastor's life group that meets here. But we will sit before we jump in, before we open in prayer and all that.

And we'll just sit in silence for a little bit. Because sometimes it's good to wait. It's good to pause. There is purpose in the pause. It stops the hustle.

[12:49] It stops everything that we brought into. All the burdens. All the weights. All the distractions. It stops all that. It says, God, I'm going to set it down.

I'm going to lay it down. I'm going to focus on you right now. So, there is purpose in the pause. It's good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord.

Pauses are not setbacks. They're setups. What do we mean by that? Pauses are not setbacks. They're setups. Y'all, about 100% of the time, I will see every pause, every delay as a setback.

I will see it as a negative. Man, why did this happen? I was all ready for whatever was supposed to come next. But there was a delay. There was a pause. There was a setback.

The truth is, God is using that to set you up for what he wants. And it may be what you were working for. It may be what you planned for.

[13:53] But you weren't quite ready for it yet. So, God gave you a pause to set you up for something so much better than what you thought you were ready for.

That could be in the area of a job. That could be in the area of financial problems. That could be in the area of relational problems. There's all kinds of ways that God institutes pauses into our lives.

Right here in the life of our church, sometimes we experience that. The pauses are a positive thing. They're good for us. It's good for the kids to have to wait before they open their gifts, right?

You can't just wrap them, put them under the tree, and then instantly the kids just pounce. Because there's no anticipation. There's no buildup. And so, the appreciation for it goes down. So, sometimes it's the same for us.

God wants us to appreciate fully what he's going to do, how he's going to work, how he's going to show up. How many of you have seen God show up in your life?

[14:55] And you can testify by uplifted hand, I have seen God show up in my life. Yeah. So many across this room. But he probably didn't show up exactly when you first hoped he would.

There was probably a bit of a pause. Sometimes that'll last days. Sometimes it'll last years. But God's timing is perfect.

And he's setting you up for what he's going to do in his time. So, the illustration of that, man, there's nothing better than Joseph.

Genesis chapter 37 all the way through chapter 50 will tell you this story. It'll lay it out in great detail of all the pauses that Joseph had to endure.

God gave him these prophetic dreams of one day all this great success would come to Joseph. But he couldn't realize it then. He couldn't see it happen then.

[15:54] He had to wait. And not only that, he had to be ignored. He had to be envied. He had to be mocked and ridiculed because he had shared these dreams that God gave him.

There was this tension, this tension with his family, his brothers. And then he was sold into slavery. And another pause, another setback, right? But then he landed at Potiphar's house.

And Potiphar was a great master in Egypt and promoted Joseph and gave him all this responsibility and authority. And Joseph's life then was going well. But then there was another pause, another setback.

And Potiphar levied that, Potiphar's wife levied that false accusation at him and had him thrown in prison. And then he was at the end of his rope, sitting in an Egyptian prison, falsely accused, something he never did.

But then God used that to give him favor with the jailer, to give him favor with the two men who worked for the Pharaoh. And then there was another setback as he interprets the dreams in prison.

[17:00] As God gives him this gift of prophecy and interpretation, he interprets these dreams. And then they come to pass exactly as he interpreted. But one of the men who promised Joseph, I won't forget about you when I'm released from prison.

I'll help you. I'll be your advocate. I'll get you out. And then what did he do? He forgot. So another setback, another pause, another season of waiting until finally he's summoned by Pharaoh.

And then God's fulfillment of that promise in his life comes to pass. He's lifted up. He's given great power, a position of great influence for God. And then another setback comes when he's reunited with his brothers.

But there's not instant reconciliation. There's another pause, another season of waiting until Benjamin can come, until his father can come. And then they're reunited and all is forgiven.

And they get to live happily ever after, so to speak. But there were so many pauses, so many setbacks. Could we have endured that?

[18:03] I don't know. Would we have given up at some point along the way? I don't know. Have you endured your life? Have you given up? Has there been one setback too many?

And you just refuse to see them now as setups from God? That faith is weakened. Faith has drained. And sometimes it's hard to go into a Christmas season when it's supposed to be about hope and joy and all this when you're just feeling empty and broken.

I pray that it's good for us. Good for us. Good for our hearts to remember these words.

That it's good to quietly wait for salvation from the Lord because we won't find salvation anywhere else. You can search the whole world over.

But you will not find salvation anywhere else. So, the pauses are good for us. They have a purpose. And number two, hope is healthy.

[19:14] Hope is healthy. Fill in the blank if you'd like. Hope is healthy. Romans chapter 15 talks about this a little bit. Paul is writing to the church in Rome and he says, I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him.

And then he continues to say, then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. I talked a little bit about this to our staff last week.

This confident hope. There is a confidence that comes from having hope in God. Why? Because he doesn't let us down. Because even when there have been moments of time and seasons when our confidence lacked, eventually we saw God come through and then hindsight, we get to look back and see, oh, that's what God was doing then.

That's why he took us through that. And that builds this confidence in him. And so our hope is not uneducated. It's not misguided.

Our hope has this strong confidence. Because we've experienced God coming through and it's built our faith time and time again.

[20:36] And maybe you don't have everything you always wanted. Truth is, we'll never have that experience of fulfillment until someday when God rights all the wrongs.

And everything is truly made right on earth. And there is truly peace on earth, goodwill toward men. That day is coming.

God's in the restoration process right now. He's in the renewal process right now. And we get to be a part of that. We get to be a part of God's mission of redemption to this earth.

But until that is completed, then we'll never experience that full satisfaction because not everything yet is healed. Not all the broken has been put back together.

God is still working in this world. Sin is still fighting. Sin is still actively working against God. Our flesh still fights back against our spirit. And so we're never fully going to experience this idea of full satisfaction.

[21:41] But we can have confidence that God is alive and well and working in us and in the world around us. So that is our source of hope.

And from that, we get joy. And from that, we get peace. Do you realize these are three of the themes of Advent that we're going to be covering during this Christmas season? We're starting with hope today.

And then we're going to joy and then peace. And then we finish with love. But this is where it all comes from. It all comes from hope.

So it starts with the source of hope, which is God. And the hope we're talking about is a confident hope. So hope is healthy.

Fascinating thing. If you want to dive into Romans chapter 15, I could not recommend it more, especially during this Christmas season. In the verses leading up to verse 13 here, we're not going to take the time to do it today because I want to let you out a reasonable time.

[22:41] But if you want to look back maybe in your own personal time with God or if you want to gather your family around the Bible and talk about this, then Romans chapter 15, the verses leading up to verse 13, talk about Jesus, about his promised coming.

So it's perfect to kick off the Christmas season with Romans chapter 15. And it's not often a passage that we read from during the Christmas season. But it's perfect for that, especially when we're talking about hope.

It all flows from hope. Interesting thing is, God knows this. He designed us this way. We need hope in our lives.

I don't need you to raise your hand right now. Please don't. But if you can think back to a time of depression in your life, maybe it's now.

Maybe it's recent. Maybe it was long ago. But if you can think back to a time when things were not all okay with you. You sing that hymn, it is well with my soul.

[23:46] And you had a hard time maybe singing that because it's not well with my soul right now. You probably had a hard time saying there's a lot of hope. You probably felt hopeless.

Let me ask you this. How was your health during that time? Because studies show, and I'll read this for you. The print's kind of small.

Studies show that health and hope have a direct connection. A Harvard study tracking over 70,000 participants found that optimism could literally extend life by 10 to 15% with the most optimistic women.

I'm just focusing on women here. I didn't do that. That's not my. Far more likely by 50 to 70% to reach 85. The age of 85.

50 to 70% more likely. The effect, we're not talking about the power of positive thinking or what was that? Norman Vincent Peale, whoever wrote that. We're not talking about that.

[24:52] It showed up in biology. Lower inflammation, calmer stress hormones, stronger immunity, reduced risk of heart disease. Reduced risk of stroke, cancer, even infections.

Optimism is not talking about ignoring reality. It means your body runs on the belief that the future is worth moving toward. That's hope.

The belief that the future is worth moving toward. Where do you find that hope? You find it in your faith in God. That's where you find a hope that will not let you down.

And there is a direct correlation there to your physical health. Healthy optimism is hope. So, hope rooted in God produces joy, peace, and confident trust.

And it literally strengthens the body and the mind. So, I want to leave you with this thought on hope. Trusting God builds contagious confidence.

[26:01] Trusting God builds contagious confidence. Why do we say that word contagious? When we're just talking about health.

I want to be the kind of person that doesn't spread a deadly contagion. And I'm not talking about COVID-19. Or whatever else.

Even the common cold. I'm talking about a Grinch spirit. Okay? If we're going to put it in Christmas terms. I'm talking about a negative spirit.

I'm talking about being a Debbie Downer, so to speak. Your spirit is contagious. To the people in your sphere of influence.

And that could be your family. Could be your friends. Could be whoever interacts with you at the workplace. If you're retired. Whoever you spend your time with. And it can certainly be our church.

[27:00] Please don't spread. Your contagious bad spirit. Instead, spread a contagious confidence in God.

Not confidence in me. Not even confidence in the leadership of the church. But confidence in God. And that what he is doing is right.

And even if you don't agree with everything. You have absolute confidence in God. And so you trust that he's got it under control. He knows what he's doing.

And he's leading the church in the way it ought to go. And if you can't have that confidence. Then find somewhere you can have that confidence.

Because you need it. You need the hope. So trusting God builds contagious confidence. When you have confidence in God and what he's doing.

[28:00] It spreads to somebody else. In your sphere of influence. Think about all the people inside the sphere of influence that you have. Who have you affected?

How have you affected their spirit? How has your spirit affected their spirit? I have to ask myself this question. When I'm having a bad day.

Guess who else is having a bad day? Holly, Austin, and Bo. That's how it works. We affect those around us.

So we can affect them for good. Or we can affect them for bad. But trusting God builds contagious confidence. And I promise you. Each of those words was carefully chosen.

Because contagious confidence doesn't just happen. It builds over time. Hope builds over time. It's directly connected to faith.

[28:59] Faith in God builds our hope. It builds our trust. So hope is healthy for us. The pause has a purpose.

Waiting is never wasted. Let's move on. Waiting works. Waiting works. Our last thought I want to leave you with today. Waiting works.

I want you to go back to Genesis. You don't have to turn in your Bible there. It's too many passages to turn to. Unless you just like to be looking through it as we reference it. But Abraham and Sarah.

This is Genesis 12 through 21. Abraham and Sarah. Think back. If you don't know the story. Just bear with us for a minute.

Abraham the old patriarch of Israel. And God was using him as the leader of his people for a generation. And Sarah was his wife. And she was childless.

[29:58] She had no children. And then well into her old age. God promised her that she would have a child. She had to wait for a long time to have a child.

She wanted one. She craved one. We're not going to get into all the things she did to try to manipulate the system and bear a child. But her faith in God was enough.

It wasn't real strong. When God initially promised her a child. What did she do? She laughed. I can understand that.

You know. You say you're going to give me a child at how old I am. No. No way. No way. But waiting strengthened her faith.

And it made her the fulfillment of that child sweeter. And then God came through on his promise. Waiting does work.

[30:58] Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 and verse 18. It's too many to put on the screen. So if you wouldn't mind turning over there. Romans chapter 8. We read from Romans a moment ago.

Now go to chapter 8. This was Paul's one of the chief writings that Paul ever did. He wrote it to the churches scattered throughout Rome. And they would pass his letter through the churches.

And it gives us so much insight into the gospel of Jesus. The good news of Jesus. How God sees us. What he wants to offer us.

His free gift of eternal life. And listen. You might have been coming to church for a long time. Maybe this is your first time in a long time. But regardless. God loves you.

He knows that you're not perfect. He knows you're a sinner. Believe me. He knows. He says we're all sinners. We all need his forgiveness. This is one of the themes of this letter that Paul wrote in Romans.

[31:57] He says all have sinned. And the wages. What we have earned from our sin. Is death. It's eternal separation from God. But the free gift of God is eternal life.

In Jesus Christ our Lord. And that's what we talk about during the Christmas season. How God sent Jesus. The little baby Jesus. To grow up and be a sacrifice for our sins.

He would pay the penalty. With his death on the cross. And so because Jesus did that for us. Now we all have the opportunity. To place our faith in him.

And say God. I believe in you. I believe. I'm one of the ones that believes that Jesus is God. And I put my faith in him. To forgive me of my sin. To save me from that.

And that's what we call getting saved. How many of you can raise. Look. We should have as many of you as possible on this one. How many of you can testify by uplifted hand. God has saved me from my sins.

[32:53] Amen. Yes. All across this room. Now if you couldn't raise your hand a moment ago. That's okay. I want to talk to you. Many of us would love to sit down and talk to you. And just show you from God's word. We want you to at least hear.

How much God loves you. Wants to save you and forgive you. And give you a new life. We're not going to force you. We're not going to twist your arm. But we want you to hear this good news.

That has changed so many lives. In this place. And around the world. So this is kind of what Romans is about. So keep that in the back of your mind. As we read verses 18 through 25 of Romans 8.

Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. Okay. So he's talking about suffering. Everything they're going through. This church in Rome was being persecuted.

They were suffering a lot. And he said what you're suffering now is nothing compared to how good it's going to be. The glory he's going to reveal to us later. And then he says for all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day.

[33:51] When God will reveal who his children really are. Man you don't have to raise your hand. But how many of you would love to know who are God's real children on this earth? Because there's a lot of people out there who say oh yeah man I'm a Christian.

And you're looking at them like are you really? Because you don't act like one. You don't talk like one. You're mean. You're nasty. You walk around with a scowl on your face all the time.

What exactly has God done in your life? Because it's hard to tell. Anyway. It'll be great to know someday who God's children really are. He said he's going to reveal it. Against its will all creation was subjected to God's curse.

Now we too wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children.

Including the new bodies he has promised us. Yes and amen to that. If we look forward to something we don't yet have.

[34:55] We must. What does that say? Wait patiently. And confidently. Right here in the New Living Translation it says we must wait patiently and confidently.

There's that word again. Confidence. Confidence. It's not just waiting like oh man this is the worst. I hate waiting. It's waiting with confidence.

That's saying God's got this thing figured out. It might be hard right now. But it's going to be so good later. That's confidence. Confidence. That's saying I can endure whatever hardship this world brings me right now.

This broken world in which I live. I can get through it because I have confident hope that God is on my side. God is who he says he is.

He will do what he says he will do. I've seen it in my life and he'll do it again. That's confident waiting. If we trust in God the waiting is sweeter and it becomes less about the destination and more about the journey.

[36:09] Having a relationship with Jesus is not a get into heaven free card. And it's not a get out of hell free card. This relationship God is intentional about this relationship right now.

In the here and the now. He has a purpose for us now. It's not just all about the future. I'm afraid sometimes with how we read the book of Revelation. Or even how we have our eschatology or our doctrinal beliefs about the things that are going to happen in the future.

God gives us glimpses of that in the scriptures. But we don't have the full playbook revealed to us. And that's alright. But I'm afraid we get so locked into that. We almost think of this life as just a momentary blip on the radar.

And it's like well this isn't really that important. Because we're just down here until we can get out of here. The truth is God has a powerful purpose for us while we're on this earth.

He loves us so deeply. And I don't think anybody would question that. Because he proved it on the cross how much he loves us. And so he loves us so much.

[37 : 19] That he's forfeiting his presence with us. To fulfill this powerful purpose he has for us on this earth. So what is that purpose?

There's purpose in the pause. There's purpose in the waiting. There's purpose in the meantime. The season of in between. And there's nothing so sweet as finding God's purpose for you.

There's nothing so fulfilling as fulfilling God's purpose for you. Which is to have a good relationship with him.

It's to bring him glory. It's to make him known. It's what he created us for. So waiting is not wasting.

You know what it actually is? Waiting is. Going the wrong way. There we go. Man I think I just lost this. Would you skip up to right after Romans 8.

[38 : 26] 18. There you go. Thank you. For some reason this thing quit working on me. Waiting is not wasting. You know what it actually is? It's worship. Waiting is how we worship.

Do you know what our kids have to admit. When we don't let them open the presents right away. That mom and dad are in charge.

And I have to listen to them. That's what they have to. They don't have to say it that way. But they have to agree with that. And not just go tear into the boxes.

When we admit. That God is in charge. And his way is best. Then our waiting becomes worship.

I recognize. That God has me in this season. For a purpose. There is a purpose behind this pause in my life. And so I am going to worship God.

[39 : 26] By not fighting it. I'm going to worship God. By not allowing myself to be miserable during it. I'm going to say. God. I'm bringing you all my fears. I'm bringing you all my despair.

And I'm going to cast them at your cross. And say. God. Please. Redeem this. Give me back the peace. There's an old song. And it wasn't even my favorite. But I think the words are appropriate for this moment.

It said. I'm trading my sorrows. Anybody remember that one? Christian song. Maybe youth group a long time ago. I'm trading my sorrows. I'm trading my shame. We can trade all of that.

For God's peace. God's joy. God's hope. When we worship him. Say God. I'm recognizing you.

I'm putting you in your rightful place. You're in control. I don't see how it's all going to happen. I don't know why it's this way. In my mind.

[40 : 24] I wish things were different. But I recognize you're allowing this. And so I'm trusting in you. And that is worship.

And so waiting is never wasted. When God is working. In the waiting. Remember that? Waiting is never wasted. When God is working. In the waiting. I want to give you this final thought.

And I'll be done. There's a book. Written called. The Sacred Slow. Would you take me up to that slide? The Sacred Slow.

Written by. Alicia Brett Choll. I think is how you say the last name. A Holy Departure. From Fast Faith. This book is powerful.

In that. It asks us to slow down. And that's what I'm going to ask you to do. This Christmas season. And I'm going to ask myself to do that.

[41 : 26] Put it on the screen. Slow. Down. Slow. Down. Can we say that together?

Now you got to say all the O's. Ready? Slow. Down. That's right. Thank you. You beat us all. Slow down.

Why? Because the gift is waiting. God might want you to slow down. Look. Some things you might have to do fast. That's just the reality of life. But way too much of our life is fast.

And way too much of our expectations of this life are quick and instant and immediate. And way too much of our expectations of our relationship with God and this Christian life that we walk is fast, instant, immediate.

And God is asking us, slow down. Be with me. Embrace the struggle. Embrace this moment. Be. You want to get all philosophical with it or psychological with it.

[42 : 29] Be present wherever you are. And there's truth to that. We should be present. Be fully present wherever we are. Because where that is, God allowed you to be there. When that person approaches you asking for money and you're thinking, oh great, here comes another person asking for a handout.

What in the world? God allowed that person to come to you. Doesn't mean you have to give them everything you own. But it might mean they need an interaction with a child of God at that moment. It might need, they need an interaction with someone full of hope, joy, peace, love, contentment, long-suffering, the fruits of the Spirit.

So how can we slow down? How can we embrace the sacred slow? Or you could put it this way, how can we embrace the holy slowdown?

The holy slowdown. Waiting is never wasted. Every sigh, every patient moment, every prayer builds hope that God is working in the waiting.

So celebrate this holy slow of Advent. If you need to wake up 30 minutes earlier, take some time in prayer. If you need to go to bed a little bit later, take some time in prayer.

[43 : 44] If you need to stop, sit with God. Sit with your Savior. Advent is hope. It is trust. It is confidence. It is expectation of God who never fails.

He's at work. The gift is Jesus. And the gift is already here with us. So embrace this moment with our Savior. Would you bow your head with me? God, right now you have challenged us from your word.

I pray that you would challenge now our hearts. That you would apply it directly. I can't know every person's situation and exactly what they need to do. It's all I can do to keep my own walk with you.

The center of my attention and what you want from me. So I just ask that right now you would do that by your spirit individually for each of us.

Apply your word. Apply the principles that we've gleaned from it. Let no one walk out of here today without having heard from you. Without having experienced your presence.

[44 : 45] And this challenge to slow down. Wait. And hope. God, there are people who are hurting in this room. There are people who feel hopeless in this room.

There are people who are struggling right now. That wish that things were different. That don't know maybe how they're going to be able to pay their bills. Or what's going to happen. Or how a relationship is ever going to be restored. They're worried about things.

Fear has gripped their hearts. I pray that you would be the God of comfort to them. That you would be the God of hope to them. That you would show us, remind us.

Why we place that faith in you to begin with. Why we place that hope in you to begin with. Church, in your seats right now. Would you just have a moment of quiet prayer with God?

If you need to come down and kneel at the steps up front. If you'd like to do that, that's open to you. If you'd like to kneel where you are, remain seated. If you need to talk to a pastor, I'm up front.

[45 : 56] Jared's up front. We're able to talk with you. If you need someone to talk with, just come down and meet us here. We do. Thank you.