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Through Generations

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Through Generations

Abstract

"For my grandmother, living in Advent meant not only a longing for her eternal home but a concern for her children's children, because, just as God was faithful across the generations from Adam to Christ, He will be faithful across the generations from Christ to the Last Day."

Posting about hope in God's covenant promises from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/through-generations/>

Keywords

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Through Generations

 inallthings.org/through-generations/

Donald Roth

This is post 6 of 8 in the series *“Advent Devotions”*

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Preparing through Generations

It's a cliché observation at this point: the Christmas season seems to come earlier and earlier each year, doesn't it? It seems the leaves are hardly off the trees before Christmas tunes are being piped through the local stores, shopping malls, and radio stations. Some fear this is just a crass tactic used to push us into consumerism, and this fear is not totally ungrounded. In response, however, we often stubbornly resolve that not one bar of “Away in a Manger” shall be heard in our households, at least not until after Thanksgiving leftovers have been put away. It's as if we've all agreed that it's improper to strain too eagerly into the advent season for fear of compromising our values. Perhaps, however, that eagerness, if for the right reasons, isn't such a bad thing. Christmas celebrates the long-awaited coming of the Messiah, and the preparations of Advent can both comfort us with God's faithfulness and encourage us to live daily in anticipation of the Second Advent yet to come.

Great is Thy Faithfulness

In reading the Gospels, we often skip over the genealogies of Matthew and Luke entirely. We may view them as primarily designed to establish credentials essential to ancient audiences but passé in the modern context. Sure, it's important that Jesus be traced back to the line of David for purposes of Biblical prophecy, but most of us are happy to buy the conclusion without needing the author to show his work. Skipping this, however, makes it all too easy to overlook the incredible testimony contained in these long lists of “son of” and “begat” when the genealogies are in fact a testimony to the countless generations of the Lord's faithfulness.

The genealogies that accompany the Christmas story are a reminder that all of redemptive history waited in strained anticipation for the coming of the Messiah promised first in the Garden. While we may feel we experience some of that strain trying to sit attentively through their reading, these lists speak to a history of a promise made flesh through prostitutes and murderers, foreigners and kings, through ages where men walked with God and through 400 years of relative silence. Through countless generations, many filled with faithless people, God remained faithful, fulfilling His covenant promise and sending His Son to us. When we read the genealogies of the Bible, it's like counting the rings on the Tree of Life, giving us a vivid

picture of just how long and how thoroughly God has remained faithful, generation to generation.

Living in Advent

While the reading of the genealogies is a testimony to God's faithfulness in the past, it can also remind us of our role in the ongoing Advent. While the redemptive history of the Old Testament is about a world preparing for its savior, Christ left with a message of His ongoing work, saying in John 14 that He goes to prepare a place for us. So, just as the Israelites of old could strain in anticipation of the coming Messiah, we should long for His return. Just like the church in Israel trusted in God's faithfulness and recounted to their children the generations of His ongoing care, we should do the same.

That was made very real for me recently, when, on the 15th anniversary of my grandmother's passing, my uncle posted a video that my grandparents made for their posterity in 1995. My grandmother, Joyce Geurkink, had a profound impact on my life, and, at 30, it's hard for me to wrap my head around the fact that I've now lived half of my life without her. Seeing her again and hearing her words across the years has affected me deeply once again, and I think what she said can be instructive in thinking about what it means to live in Advent:

"[T]he Bible says that things will get so bad toward the end of the world that the question is asked whether faith will be found. My hope and prayer is that faith will indeed be found, and it will be found in my children's children, that they will have remained faithful to a covenant God who promised to be faithful to them."

For my grandmother, living in Advent meant not only a longing for her eternal home but a concern for her children's children, because, just as God was faithful across the generations from Adam to Christ, He will be faithful across the generations from Christ to the Last Day.

This concern was manifested in a very specific way for her: through a partnership of parents, the church, and Christian schools.

"Always, Christian education has been very important to us, and I don't know if you who I'm talking to today still have that privilege. It's something that's becoming very cost prohibitive, and parents who are committed to it have to deprive themselves of many things that their friends and their neighbors are enjoying, but we believe children are a heritage of the Lord, and we will bring them up to the best of our ability, with the help of the church and the school."

For others, living in Advent may take different forms, but this message weighs heavily on me this year. As my daughter just recently started saying that she's not just Piper, but Piper *Roth*, what am I teaching her about what the heritage of our family means? More importantly, how am I going to help her understand the welcoming comfort of the larger family of God? What can I do to see that, as far as I am able, my daughter will share the same longing for God and the same fire for the next generation that my grandmother had? As I encourage her to strain into the second Advent, I plan to share with her the generations of our God's faithfulness, and I might just be willing to sing a few of the songs that speak to that eager anticipation of the first Christmas, even outside of the month of December.