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Advent: What Are You Waiting For?

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Advent: What Are You Waiting For?

Abstract

"As we struggle not to be overwhelmed by the Christmas season, I wonder: Do we still have a concrete picture of what God's faithfulness means for us? If Christmas is the beginning of God's plan of salvation, can we say clearly what we are saved from?"

Posting about waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled 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/advent-what-are-you-waiting-for/>

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Comments

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

Advent: What are you Waiting for?

 [all in allthings.org/advent-what-are-you-waiting-for/](http://allthings.org/advent-what-are-you-waiting-for/)

Neal DeRoo

We live in an age of action. We don't want people who just sit around and talk about things *ad nauseum*: we want doers, people who will get things done.

This urge for action often looks a lot like impatience. When I'm stuck in traffic (which, thankfully, is not often nowadays), I want to get going again. When the person in front of me has an opportunity to merge into traffic but doesn't do it, I get annoyed: "What are you waiting for," I ask in exasperation: "A written invitation? Just go!"

Advent is a time of year when the "What are you waiting for?" question is about something much more than just an expression of impatience. It is, perhaps, the central question of Advent itself. For, if Advent is a time of hopeful expectation, of waiting with longing, we need to stop, from time to time, to ask ourselves: what are we waiting for?

Are we waiting for the semester to wind down so we can enjoy a time of rest and relaxation?

Are we waiting to get together with family again, to spend time with loved ones that we maybe haven't seen in a long time?

Are we waiting to see the look on a loved one's face when they open that perfect present we got for them?

Are we waiting to open our own presents, and see what new toys we will have to play with?

Are we waiting for our favorite Christmas carol to play on the radio, or for our favorite Christmas special to play on TV?

Are we waiting to see our kids or grandkids perform in their Christmas programs, singing the songs we sang as kids, re-enacting the story that has been done and re-done, year after year: "In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree..."?

Are we waiting for the birth of a tiny, helpless baby, "asleep on the hay"?

At various points in my life, I've Advent-waited for all these things. But maybe, I'm not waiting big enough. In Luke's gospel, we are introduced to a cast of characters before Jesus arrives on the scene. Elizabeth, Zechariah and Mary are all waiting for babies, in one way or another—but they are also waiting for something so much more. They are waiting for the covenant God to live up to His promises.

And what promises those were! Mary lauds this covenant God for his faithfulness, not just in the past, but to Abraham's descendants forever more (Luke 1:55). And look at Mary's vision of what this faithfulness looked like:

"[God] has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:52-53)

Zechariah, too, has what might strike us as very peculiar pictures of God's promised faithfulness:

"To rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

And to enable us to serve him without fear
In holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:74-75).

Mary and Zechariah have concrete ideas of what God's salvation will mean for them: the hungry fed, the rich left empty-handed, rescue from enemies, life without fear. Mary and Zechariah knew what they were waiting for, and the baby in Mary's womb was the coming-to-fruit of everything they'd be waiting all their lives for. No wonder they were so excited!

As we struggle not to be overwhelmed by the Christmas season, I wonder: Do we still have a concrete picture of what God's faithfulness means for us? If Christmas is the beginning of God's plan of salvation, can we say clearly what we are saved from? And are those the things that are really bothering us? Does God-with-us mean an end to violence and lives of terror? Is the baby in the manger the answer to the ISIS problem? Will Immanuel care for the refugees? Will the 'light shining in the darkness' pay my bills this winter and keep my family warm and well-fed? Can the Christ-child heal the wounds of our broken nation, or at least repair the divisions that are so obvious on my Facebook feed?

This Advent, as we live in the time of waiting, perhaps we need to take some time to get past the clichés, the trite responses and the easy answers, and ask ourselves, with all depth and seriousness: "What are we waiting for?" I've lived through many Advents in my life, and I'm not sure I know concretely what I'm waiting for. Do you?