

Title: Hope in the Waiting (Passage: John 11)

Advent Intro:

Prayer

- *Story of waiting for house.*
- 2000 years ago, Israel was waiting. And they had been waiting for a very LONG time. For a few thousands years God had spoken to them about a coming Messiah, and they had waited.
 - But that period of waiting was at least accompanied by God moving and speaking to them. At least God wasn't silent in that waiting. Until he was.
- Around the year 430BC, God spoke through the prophet Malachi one last time, and then, God was silent.... For 400 years.
- Some of you feel like God hasn't spoken in while.
- 400 years and Israel had not heard from God.
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- And so there they are in the first century, wondering if God had forgetting about them, still waiting for their Messiah.. And they had hoped in God, but their hope was growing dim, as 10 generations had passed had since God had said a word.
- Jesus hadn't come , and Israel was waiting.
- And THAT is what advent is about. It's about the waiting of Jesus. Remembering that God's people waited for Jesus in His first coming. But also, the reality that we are waiting for Jesus in His second coming.
- But in the space between the first coming of Jesus, and the second coming of Jesus, is us, right here, living right here, right now.
- And in this space we are waiting for Jesus to COME BACK, yes.
- But how many of us, right now, also feel like we're waiting for Jesus to just SHOW UP.
- To show in our lives in some way — in that family situation, to show up in our financial need, to show up in our illness, in our pain, in our doubt, in our disappointment, in our weariness.

John 11:1-10,11, 17-44 (NIV)

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) **3** So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." **4** When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." **5** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. **6** So when he heard that Lazarus

was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."...

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."...

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

1. God's moving is not always in our timing.

- By the time that Jesus finally shows up, Lazarus is not just dead, but dead plus four days in the tomb. That means he died, then they mourned him all day, then they prepared his body for burial, then they laid him in the tomb, and THEN four days went by.

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- It's way too late. And for Mary and Martha, not only is their brother dead, but their HOPES are dead.
- They had been waiting and waiting and Jesus didn't come through and now it is **too late**.
- But what they couldn't see was that Jesus was actually working in the waiting.
- **Jesus is always working in the waiting.**
 - Now, when Jesus got word about Lazarus, he responds by saying in v. 4 **"This sickness will not end in death."** Jesus knew how this would end, but notice that Jesus **never** sent word to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus telling THEM how this would end.
 - We don't always get the GAME PLAN, or even the GOAL from God. Sometimes all we get is what they got - silence.
 - But we have a different vantage point in this story than they did. What we get to see is that Jesus was **not aloof or uninterested** in their situation. Jesus was actually very **intentional** in his absence and his silence. There was purpose in his waiting.
- **They thought** they were waiting for God's plan to unfold (namely, Jesus coming in and healing their brother) but what we need to see is that in the Kingdom, we are not just waiting for God's plan to unfold. **Often WAITING IS God's plan.**
- Jesus wasn't too busy to move in **their** timing. He just had DIFFERENT timing. We are usually so concerned with getting to the destination of where we want to be, or even where we believe **God** wants us to be, that we can miss what he is trying to do IN THE WAITING.
- If you're still WAITING it's not because God forgot about you. It's because He's done working yet.
- What we need to realize is that often the **journey often IS the destination**. And God is just as present (if not more) in the process, than he is in the conclusion.
- And what we see here, is that the waiting, and **even the silence**, was not only God's plan, but was actually a demonstration of God's LOVE for his people. It was not a demonstration of his negligence, his dislike, or his indifference. It was a demonstration of God's love.
- **"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days." (v. 5)**
- Did you notice that after Lazarus died, once Jesus finally showed up, that Mary did not go out to greet him?
- **"When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home." (v. 20)**

- Mary LOVES Jesus, but John makes a point to tell us that Mary DID NOT go and greet Him when he came. Even her sister Martha goes out to meet Jesus, but Mary seems to keep her distance.
- But see, with me, the Father of heart in Jesus in v. 28.
- “After she (Martha) had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” (v. 28)
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- Jesus didn’t show up like she expected and believed He would. And so she’s disappointed I’m sure. Maybe even mad.
- But **Jesus pursues her** with the love of the Father, and says, “Tell Mary I want to see her.”
- Notice that Jesus **first** priority when He got into to wasn’t the DEAD GUY in the tomb getting more and more dead every second. Jesus’ **FIRST** priority was Mary’s heart.
- **Jesus is ALWAYS more concerned with your heart than your healing.**
- And like any good Father He cares more about your person, than He does about your situation.
- **And he will often USE your SITUATION to GET to your PERSON.**
- Jesus wasn’t too **busy** to move in their timing. He just had DIFFERENT plan of WHEN he was going to move. And He ALSO had a different of plan of HOW he was gonna move.

2. God may not always move how we want, or expect Him to move.

- The **expectation** was for Jesus to **heal** Lazarus. But Jesus didn’t heal Lazarus.
- And then when Jesus finally showed up, He did not show up with what they had asked for. In fact, He was **too late** to give them what they had asked for.
- Jesus was too late to give them what they THOUGHT they needed. What they wanted, and what they THOUGHT they needed was a healing.
- **But Jesus was too late for a healing. HOWEVER, He was right on time for a resurrection.**
- The hope and expectation was that Jesus would show up and **heal** Lazarus. But Jesus didn’t want to heal Lazarus. Jesus wanted to show up and raise Lazarus.
- **Maybe God doesn’t want to heal you. Maybe He wants to resurrect you.**
- Maybe he does want to do what you hope and expect him to do. Maybe he has a different (dare I say it) **better** plan.
- **God’s plan** is ALWAYS an upgrade from your plan. I don’t care if it looks like an upgrade or not. It ALWAYS is.
- **And it is ALWAYS a demonstration of His love.**

- God's economy is different than our economy, which means that sometimes the "upgrade", looks like him working his resurrection, NOT in your physical man, but in your SPIRITUAL man.
- Sometimes resurrection looks like him working NOT in your physical realm, but in your spiritual realm. He is not just after you healing. He is after your heart.
- **And I can just tell you from experience that is STILL a demonstration of His love when He doesn't show up like you expect him to.**
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- For these women this day, it APPEARED as if Jesus had no clue, or if he did, that he didn't care.
- But what they couldn't see, was that Jesus was actually right there all along. In every tear, in every doubt, in every disappointment, in every cursing, in every moment of the waiting, Jesus was right there.
- He just had a different plan of how and when he would show up. It's not always going to look like we expect (or even want) it to.
- This was the case then. It's the case now. And this was certainly the case with the coming of the Messiah.

3. God is always working in the waiting

- What the sisters of Lazarus couldn't see that day is that Jesus was actually orchestrating a plan the entire time.
- When all we feel is death. When all we see is waiting. When all we hear is silence, Jesus is actually working.
- He is orchestrating what needs to be orchestrated in order for His Kingdom to come, and for His will to be done, in our situation.
- He is working for his glory and purpose. But he is ALSO working for our good.
- Which means that not only is Jesus working AROUND you, He is working IN you.
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- But Jesus had a plan there and He has a plan with you and your situation. And His plan is glorious, and it is BETTER than yours.
- HOWEVER, because the economy of God is not like the economy of man, "better" means better for the glory and purpose of God, and better for us (on a soul level) which doesn't always mean better for us on a HUMAN carnal level, and sometimes THAT hurts!
- Jesus may want to raise you from the dead (and that's amazing) but let me tell you something about being raised from the dead:
- **The one prerequisite for resurrection:**
- **Death.**
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- Jesus had a plan to do something better and bigger in Lazarus' life than anyone could've imagined. HOWEVER, the path to getting there was much more difficult and painful than he could've ever fathomed.

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- Sometimes in order to get to the glory of resurrection, it is going to require some dying.
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- Death for the living child of God is called “surrender”.
- **2 Cor. 4:17**
- “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”
- We have a eternal HOPE that is bigger than the disappointments of our lives, and better than the grandest expectations.
- AND, every momentary affliction is WORKING IN US. God is ALWAYS working in the WAITING. Always. And SO...
- **Rom. 5:1-5 (NASB)**
- “We can exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, **hope; and hope does not disappoint**, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

4. I AM — our hope in the waiting.

- When Lazarus was sick, what they hoped for was for Jesus the healer to show up. But what they failed to miss what that Jesus was just the heaLER, he was the heaLING.
- And when Lazarus finally dies, one might have said, “Our only hope is that someone comes and raises him from the dead.” But when Jesus shows up he doesn’t show up as the the resurrector, He shows up and THE resurrection.
- **“I am the resurrection and the life.” (v. 25)**
- In what seems like no more than a situation full of death, sorrow, and hopelessness, Jesus says, **“I am the resurrection and the life. And though you may not see or sense me DOING anything yet, I am actually already there, in the waiting”**
- **Which means then, that in our waiting**, we are not left waiting and WONDERING. We are left waiting with CERTAINTY.
- Hope has to do with the future. It has to do with that which is coming.
- Dictionary defines hope: A feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen
- This feeling of expectation (“hope”) is contingent on something good in the future.
- This means, then, that **Hope is only present as long as there remains an expectation.**
- If you lose the expectation, then you lose the hope.
- Which means then, that our hope is only **as secure** as whatever we are hoping for or whatever our hope is in.
- **Our hope is only as stable as the object of our hope.**

- And if you are anything like me and have had seasons of life where you are constantly living in a state of disappointment, it is most likely because the OBJECT of your hope (what your hope is placed in) is unstable.
- **Fill in the blank:**
 - “I hope that _____”
 - “I hope so and so _____”
 - “Such and such is my only hope here.”
- You’re hope will ONLY ever be as stable as whatever you filled in the blank with.
- And that’s why the Psalmist wrote in
- **Psalm 42:11**
- **Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.”**
- It is **ONLY there in the GREAT I AM, the all sufficient one**, that we find a hope who cannot, will not, ever change or waver, or stumble, fade, or let us down. The everlasting rock of ages.

Is. 40:28-31

“The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He **will not grow tired or weary**, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope **IN THE LORD** will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

- Hope does not disappoint because **biblical hope** is placed solely in God and the promises of God. Biblical hope is placed in someone WHO CANNOT disappoint.
- **He** does not grow tired or weary.
- **He** does not fade.
- **He** does not become weak or lose his effectiveness.
- **He** does not fail or faint.
- **We** become disappointed because **we** live with hope of futures that CAN fail, do grow weak, do fade, do faint, do lose their power and effectiveness and glimmer, and ultimately WON’T satisfy, and inevitably WILL disappoint.
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- We put our hope in things like:
 - relationship
 - economy
 - dreams
 - thing I thought God spoke to me
 - career
 - house
 - kids

- spouse
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- There are **single people** here who's lives are on hold until their spouse arrives, finally curing the longing in their soul to not be alone anymore. **Your hope** of a good and pleasant future is wrapped up in some figurative future person, who will inevitably fail you and disappoint you ON A REGULAR BASIS.
 - *Expound.*
- We live in disappointment because we place hope in the dream of marriage or a spouse, or some other temporal thing instead of in the Rock of Ages, who cannot, and will not fail. HE'S THE ONE. He's the great I AM. He is the resurrection and the life. He is our HOPE.

Rom. 15:13

"May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace **as you trust in him**, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The overflowing of HOPE comes when our exception is wrapped up in the God of all HOPE.

Psalm 31:24

"Be strong and take heart, all you who hope **in the Lord.**"

- The strength of heart is for those who trust IN THE LORD. He's is the object of all unflinching Hope.
- When I have been the most hopeless and disappointed, it has been because I have placed my hope in that which **could** disappoint — when I have build my house of hope on things or ideas or people of the world, who were never designed to uphold my hope and are about as stable as the sea shore. But **The invitation from God is, "Child, come and hope in ME — build your house of hope on the Rock who does not, will not, and cannot, disappoint."**

Jesus is our Hope

- There is hope is the waiting because **Jesus** is in the waiting, and **Jesus is hope**. Not what he can do, but in **who he is**. And He is THERE in the waiting, every time — the source of all hope.
- So then, if we have expectation, not of Him doing something FOR us, but being there WITH us, then we don't have to wonder IF we should hope, because our hope is not in a situation going a certain way, but in the very presence and promise of God.
 - **It is not in the fact that He may resurrect something or bring something to life. It is in the fact that HE IS the resurrection and the life.**
- Sometimes when Jesus shows up He isn't going to DO anything.

- Sometimes it will just mean him showing up to show to BE with you. **Just his presence being present.**
 - And for those of us who have been in situations where Jesus just showed up and manifested His presence, AND did not fix a thing, can testify that his nearness really is our good. His presence really is better than life itself.
 - It's better than my life, it's better than their lives, it's better than your body experiencing life, it's better than that relationship having life, and it's better than every single thing that LIFE can bring.
 - **What brought life into the situation that day with Lazarus was not that Jesus had the power to do, it was that He had the power to BE.**
 - He WAS, and still IS the I AM.
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- And yea He can raise anyone from the dead that He wants, or bring life to any situation he pleases. But the point is: He IS the resurrection. He IS the life.
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- And THAT is what the advent season is about, being in a place of waiting, where GOD is the only one who can deliver.
 - With Israel, it had been 400 years of silence and they desperately needed a savior, and they had NO ONE else to look to but God.
 - But that is exactly where God wanted them, and this is exactly where He wants us — in the waiting, where there is nowhere else to look but to Him.
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- **But the difference between us and Israel in the first century** who had been waiting for 400 years is that they had the **future** hope of what to come - ONLY.
 - And we have a future hope also — of Christ returning. But we not only have the future hope of what is to come when Christ returns and makes all things right.
 - **But we have the fulfillment of the promise of “Immanuel” - God with us, now.**
 - **What we have right now, in this moment is His living presence.** And we can be expectant of Christ to be with us 10 years from now, and 10 days from now. But we can also expect him to be present 10 seconds from now.
 - RIGHT NOW. We have him — THE HOPE.