

Coffee Connect | Waiting

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SPEAKERS

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Hello, and welcome to Coffee Connect, a Project Zion Podcast series where we share inspiring stories and thought-provoking reflections of life and ministry that remind us of God's loving presence in the world. I'm your host, Blake Smith. And today I want to share a reflection called "Waiting."

A few weeks ago, a new cycle of the Christian year began. A time of waiting commenced. We entered into a time known in Christianity as Advent. It is supposed to be a time of anticipation and expectation, filled with hope, and peace, and joy, and love, as we await the coming birth of Jesus. But sometimes, I wonder if those things are not lost in the holiday hubbub. Anticipation is replaced with anxiety. Expectation is replaced with exhaustion. Since when has waiting been associated with positive feelings anyway. It doesn't help that our culture tells us we don't have to wait ... even that we ought not to wait. After all, we now have the ability to obtain what we want, as well as what we need, with the click of a button. We don't even have to leave the house. And if we plan it right, we can have "it" the same day ... two days at the most.

So why wait? Why are we willing to accept the waiting of Advent? When, if we're being honest, that's not how we most often approach life. Perhaps it's because we already know how the story turns out. The Christmas story is, after all, a story we've heard before. Many times. We know what's next without having to "turn the page." There are no surprises. We know that the package that is on its way will be as exactly as advertised. There is no return policy, because none is needed. In the end, the problem with knowing how the story ends, is that it allows us to take the waiting for granted ... so much so that we're not actually waiting at all, at least not for that which the Advent season promises.

I heard a story a few days ago. It was a story told by a young woman who had experienced homelessness as a child. She, her younger sister, and their mother were homeless for a little over a year during her time in middle school. In telling her story, she related the sense of desperation she had felt each day while sitting in the shelter waiting for food ... waiting to find out if they would receive a temporary housing placement ... waiting, not knowing what to expect on the next page of their story, much less how the story would "end." For her and her family, waiting wasn't a season with a preset happy ending. It was a way of life. And, it rarely included hope, or peace, or joy ... or even love. This young woman's story is not unique. Unfortunately, too many people these days have similar stories. And those stories may or may not include the absence of a physical dwelling to call home. They

do include some combination of the absence of things many of us take for granted. Hope, love, dignity, security, clean water and healthy nutritional food, family.

Words of counsel given to Community of Christ and recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants section 163:4a remind us that...

"God the Eternal Creator weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers As in all nations, who desperately seek a future of hope for their children, do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare."

It is my hope and prayer that you will think about those whose whole life is spent waiting for acceptance, for food, for shelter, to have hope, to know peace, to experience joy, and to be loved. Take time during this last week before Christmas, to do a little waiting yourself. If necessary, pretend you don't know how the story turns out. Live with a sense of anticipation and hopeful expectation. Let yourself be surprised by what's on the next page.

The Christmas story has been written for a long time, but in your waiting, you may find a few surprises that birth something new in your heart. Remember, your story is still being written.

That's all for this episode of Coffee Connect. I'm Blake Smith, and you've been listening to Project Zion Podcast. For more from Project Zion Podcast, go to projectzionpodcast.org, or find us on any of your favorite podcast platforms.

From all of us here at Project Zion Podcast, Merry Christmas and happy holidays.