

Waiting for Our Blessed Hope

12/17/23

Opening Illustration: I'm about to say something extremely controversial this morning, and it's a bit of a confession. My family set up our Christmas tree the day before Thanksgiving this year. Of course, this got us all in a very festive Christmas mood, but what happened in my three-year-old's brain was that he thought we would open presents on Thanksgiving morning. So, he woke up expecting to be opening presents, yet none were to be had. The disappointment was tangible.

However, this proved to be a valuable teaching opportunity for my boys on the reality of waiting with anticipation. I was preparing them for their long wait until they open presents on December 25th.

But this vignette impacted me as I considered how God's people are waiting. I was even a bit convicted as I saw my child's difficulty waiting for presents under a tree and how my anticipation for Christ's glorious second coming seems so muted. Even as I rejoice in and celebrate Christ's first coming, I seem to lose my enthusiasm for Christ's second coming.

In the broader Christian community, the theme and emphasis of Advent have been growing. You might hear of an advent calendar or advent reading plan. The word Advent means "the arrival of a notable person." In the modern-day Christian Church, there is an emphasis on the 4 Sundays preceding Christmas, and in our modern-day expression of Advent, most of this emphasis centers on Christ's first coming.

But going back to the first written records in the 4th century, the first two weeks of Advent focused on restraining their hearts, confessing sin, dedicating time to hope, and praying for Christ's quick return. In the second 2 weeks of Advent, the church would focus on Christ's birth. In our Christian culture, we seem to have stopped emphasizing Christ's second coming, and this is severely regrettable.¹

Rather, Christmas should build the anticipation of Christ's second coming. Just as a child anticipates the opening of presents on Christmas morning or how an expectant mother waits with anticipation for the coming of her baby, the Christmas season should build our anticipation for Christ's coming. He came once, and he will come again. So, this morning, our focus will be on the second coming of Christ.

Our passage of Scripture today is from the book of Titus, chapter 2, verse 13. I will read verses 11-14 so that we might see the context of our verse this morning.

Titus 2:11-14 *"11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 **waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for***

¹ Ryan Reeves, "The History of Advent," November 28, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-history-of-advent/>.

us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

Our verse of focus this morning is **“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”**

From this verse, I want us to see 3 points, and I’ll give them to you beforehand so you see them as we work through our verse this morning.

1. God’s People Are a Waiting People.
2. God’s People Are Waiting for a Blessed Hope.
3. This Hope We Wait for Is Personal.

I. God’s People Are a Waiting People.

- A. In Titus 2:12, there is a phrase “to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,”
- B. This phrase of “Waiting for our blessed hope” is telling us how we are to live. Christians live a daily life by waiting. We are a people who should be defined by waiting on the Lord.
- C. Throughout Biblical history, God’s people have always had to wait.
 1. Noah built the ark over the course of many years and **waited** for God to judge the people and flood the earth. (Gen. 6:3)
 2. Abraham and Sarah **waited** 25 years to have a baby after the promise that God would make out of him a nation more numerous than the sand on the seashore or stars in the night sky. (Gen. 12:2; 15:4; 17:16, 21:1-3)
 3. The children of Israel **waited** 40 years to enter the Promised Land after their disobedience. (Num. 14:24)
 4. Naomi had to **wait** to see if her line will continue following the death of her husband and two sons.
 5. Hannah had to **endure** years of barrenness and **waited** before the Lord opened her womb and gave her a son called Samuel. (I Sam. 1:1-20)
 6. David was anointed king in I Samuel 16, but for years, he **waited** and ran for his life from Saul until he sat on the throne at the age of thirty years old. (2 Sam. 5:4)
 7. Even when the Israelites were in bondage in the book of Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah urged the people of God in chapter 3, verses 25 and 26, to “wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”²
- D. Then, as you enter the New Testament, at the birth of Christ in Luke 2, you see the enthusiasm that the wait is over.

² Lam. 3:25-26 “The Lord is good to those who **wait** for him, to the soul who seeks him. **26** It is good that one should **wait quietly** for the salvation of the Lord.”

1. After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple for purification, and Simeon and the Prophetess Anna knew God's people no longer needed to wait for the Messiah.^{3 4}
 - a) The waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem was over.
 2. Even Joseph of Arimathea, the man who took Christ's body after He was crucified, is described as a man "Looking for the kingdom of God." That word "looking" also has the meaning he was waiting. (Luke 23:51)
- E. I point this out to say that in the Bible, God's people have always been people who have had to wait.
- F. But this is similar to your story as well. In the overarching meta-narrative of the Bible, God's people are waiting for Christ's return. But in your story as a Christ-follower, you are finding that you are waiting, too.
1. It might be that you are waiting for...
 - a) Better health
 - b) Marriage
 - c) Financial stability
 - d) A restored relationship
 - e) Personal emotional healing
 - f) God to work in realities our church is facing
 - g) Or a myriad of other pressures of life that we want removed.
- G. So why does God choose to have His people wait?
1. Illustration: It feels like life is a massive scene from the DMV where it feels like you wait some more to behold you need to go back to the beginning because you didn't have the proper paperwork.
 2. Waiting is so hard. It would be so much easier if God worked more quickly. So Why Wait?
 3. **Because waiting reveals two things.**
 - a) **First, it reveals that God is the one who works, and no one else can receive the credit for what He does.**
 - b) **Second, it reveals the heart of God's people and who we are really trusting in.**

The ability to wait reflects our souls' heavenly direction—you sense something greater to come.

Transition: God's people are a people who wait. But what are we waiting for? What is the big reason that we should wait?

II. God's People Are Waiting for a Blessed Hope.

³ Luke 2:25- "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, **waiting** for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

⁴ Luke 2:38- "And **coming** up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."

- A. As human beings living in the 20th century, we live between the two appearances of Jesus Christ.
1. **1st Appearance: The Grace of God**
 2. Titus mentions this first appearing in verse 11. The “grace of God has appeared.” Christ’s first appearance was a gift so mankind could be saved from their sins. He came to call men to repentance, to seek and save those who were lost. And this divine mission leads Him to Gethsemane and to Calvary to die on the cross.
 3. The timing of this first appearance isn’t random. In fact, Galatians 4:4 says that “when the right time came,” God sent Jesus. That timing wasn’t determined by throwing a dart on the timeline of history and seeing where it sticks. God the Father had a specific moment for grace to enter on the scene. There was divine purpose and intentionality.
- B. So we look back, and we see this first appearance. But we also look forward to seeing the second appearance.
1. **2nd Appearance: The Glory of God**
 2. Rather, this is not an appearance of grace. This is an appearance of glory, as verse 13 says, “The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
 3. And this glorious return will be that He “will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of the God.”⁵
 4. Jesus will not come back swaddled in a manger needing the care of His mother; rather, Jesus will come back as a commander calling those who put their faith in the righteousness of Christ.
- C. As Charles Spurgeon says, “Behind us is our trust; before is our Hope. Behind us is the Son of God in Humiliation; before us is the great God our Savior in his glory . . . the first is the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh in . . . weakness; the second is the manifestation of the same Son of God in all his power and glory.”⁶
- D. This appearance of Christ is the blessed hope!
- E. But let me ask you a question, “*Is this blessed hope a biblical version of optimism?*” “Is this just sanctified optimism?”
1. No, hope and optimism are different.
 - a) To be an optimist, you are talking about a person who observes circumstances, and based on their observation, they judge that something will improve or turn out better.
 - i) For example, I’m optimistic the weather will clear up because of the blue sky I see on the horizon.
 - ii) I’m optimistic my team will win because of how many shots we’ve had on goal.

⁵ I Thessalonians 4:16

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, [The Two Appearings and the Discipline of Grace.](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 196.

- iii) There is a reason why no one is optimistic about the Carolina Panthers, because there is no reason to be excited about that team. If you didn't know, they are 1-12; for you non-football fans, that is an abysmal record.
 - iv) It's rational, it's secular, meaning you can be optimistic yet not believe in God.
2. But Hope is actually different... .
- a) Because hope looks at the circumstances and says, "Boy, things don't look good. But there is something outside of these circumstances which causes me to believe that all will be righted in the end."
 - b) This blessed hope is not found in some circumstantial reality of my life; it's not found in the moral compass of society; the blessed hope is not found in the sphere of my control; the blessed hope is found solely in Christ alone and trusting Him alone.⁷
 - (a) This is how Job could say, *"Though he slay me, I will hope in him; (Job 13:15)*

F. Now, let me ask you a question: If the appearing of the grace of God came at the appointed time, the exact right moment, can we be assured that the glory of God, the second coming of Christ, will come at the appointed time? We can!

- 1. Christ will not return too early, and He will not return too late.
- 2. In fact, Peter writes in 2 Peter 3 that even though those Christians experienced immense evil under the government ruled by Nero, the reason why the Lord's return is delayed is so that more people can turn to faith in Christ.⁸
 - a) *Exodus 34:6-7 "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,"*

Additional Material: ⁹

⁷ Jeremiah 17:5-8

⁸ More of this theme: <https://bibleproject.com/articles/2-peter-delay-jesus-return-crisis-of-patience/>

⁹ Now, in the New Testament, we see a theme that we are to wait **WITH** hope. This is a confident expectation. This Faith in the Darkness.

- *I Corinthians 13:13 "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*
- *Romans 8:25 "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

As Christians, we are to live with hope. The reason we can live with hope is because Christ is the Hope.

- Because as verse 11 says, "For the Grace of God has already appeared."
- So the theological realities and ramifications of Christ being born in a manger... the grace that appeared, as Titus says, is that we have a present-moment confident expectation of a future return of our Savior. In other words, **if he kept his promise to come once, he will come again.**

- G. So, because we are living between the two appearances of Christ, the realities of Christmas should actually build our belief, our hope, and our anticipation that Jesus is coming back, which then allow us, through the power of the Spirit, to wait with courage and confidence.

We've looked at two main ideas from these verses:

1. God's People Are a Waiting People.
2. God's People Are Waiting for a Blessed Hope.

III. This Hope We Wait for Is Personal.

- A. Why does Titus 2:13 say, "waiting for **OUR** blessed hope"?
- B. This blessed hope is personally and intimately ours.
- C. You know, so often in waiting, we feel alone. Waiting feels like it excludes us from what is really happening in life. Waiting often causes us to feel like we've missed out on something.
1. In the moments of waiting, we often hear ourselves saying, "We've missed the boat. We are missing out. We are alone."
- D. While we wait, we have Emmanuel, God, with us.
- E. So, the waiting that you're doing in your life is actually done with Jesus, and if you are waiting with Jesus, you've not missed the boat because He is never too late and never too early. If God brought into the fullness of time His Son into this world, He will perfectly work for His glory and your good at the exact right moment.
- F. **Illustration:**
1. Let me illustrate this by reading a letter that Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to his fiancé Maria von Wedemeyer. At this time, he is writing from prison, and the letter was written on December 1st, 1943.
 2. In case you don't know of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he was a dissenter of the Third Reich and was imprisoned for his courageous actions. Just before Hitler surrendered to the Allied forces, he was executed in prison at the age of 39.
 3. This is what he wrote to his fiancé before Christmas.

"Not everyone can wait: neither the sated nor the satisfied nor those without respect can wait. The only ones who can wait are people who carry restlessness around with them and people who look up with reverence to the greatest in the world. Thus, Advent can be celebrated only by those whose souls give them no peace, who know that they are poor and incomplete, and who sense something of the greatness that is supposed to come, before which they can only bow in humble timidity, waiting until he inclines himself toward us—the Holy One himself, God in the child in the manger. God is coming; the Lord Jesus is coming; Christmas is coming. Rejoice, O Christendom!"

"I think we're going to have an exceptionally good Christmas. The very fact that every outward circumstance precludes our making provision for it will show whether we can be content with what is truly essential. I used to be very fond of thinking up and buying presents, but now that we have nothing to give, the gift God gave us in the birth of Christ will seem all the more glorious; the emptier our hands, the better we understand what

Luther meant by his dying words: "We re beggars; it s true." The poorer our quarters, the more clearly we perceive that our hearts should be Christ s home on earth."

*Letter to fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer,
December 1, 1943¹⁰*

Conclusion: This morning, we've seen from Titus 2:13 that

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2. God's People Are Waiting for a Blessed Hope.
3. This Hope We Wait for Is Personal.

So, what do we do? I think a fitting way for us to end is to sing the Christmas carol "Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel" as we cry out to the Lord for Him to come for His people.

¹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, [*God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*](#), ed. Jana Riess, trans. O. C. Dean Jr., First edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 6.