

What Are We Waiting For?

What are we waiting for?

On a minor irritant scale

We wait in traffic to get to work.

Or we wait at the checkout line.

Or we wait for the next installment

Of our favorite Netflix series.

On a more serious scale

We wait for a bitter fight to be over.

We wait to hear test results from a biopsy.

We wait for strength

To fight nagging personal problems.

What are we waiting for?

On a much broader scale . . .

In the world around us, as did Habakkuk

We see the violence and injustices around us.

We see devastating effects of climate change

From Mexico Beach, FL to Paradise CA.

We helplessly wait.

We see the madness of gun violence and mass killings.

We wait along with the bereaved.

We wait for peace . . .

What Are We Waiting For?

From wars raging . . .

Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen

Terrorism, ethnic conflicts

Domestic abuse

And from the wars raging within us . . .

Stress, anxiety, depression and despair.

Destruction and violence are ever-present

Justice paralyzed by division.

We wait

We wait for change.

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During the height of the Boko Haram conflict in NE Nigeria

As the terrorists moved about freely

Burning and killing and terrorizing . . .

I received a call from Dr. Rebecca Dali

Wife to the President of EYN (COB in Nigeria).

They were fleeing for their lives . . .

All the officials of the church in Nigeria

Running from the terror stalking them.

She calls me right in the middle of their flight

And begs me to pray for them!

It was surreal!

There I was sitting in the my cozy pastor's study

While she and her husband join thousands of others

Fleeing from Boko Haram.

Please pray for us, our families, all of us,

What Are We Waiting For?

Who are in harm's way
Pray that we might be spared.

And deep within my soul,
Then and there . . .
And for months afterwards
Like Habakkuk, I prayed . . .

“How long, O Lord, must I call for help
But you do not listen?”

How long, must I cry out to you, “Violence!”
But you do not save?”

How long do we have to wait?”

I don't have to tell you
We live in deeply disturbing times.

What are we waiting for?

We're waiting for things to get better.
Habakkuk lived in the turbulent times
Between the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC
And the fall of the Southern Kingdom in 587 BC.

The Assyrian army had swept down from the north
And destroyed one city after another
Brutally killing men, women, and children.

And not long afterwards the Babylonians
Struck the southern Kingdom
Destroying the city of Jerusalem
And sending the people into exile.

What Are We Waiting For?

Violence, injustice and destruction surrounded Habakkuk.

And he cried out

God, why won't you do something about this?

Habakkuk questions why God would allow evil to persist.

It is a question many believers struggle with.

There's a word for it: theodicy.

Theodicy seeks to explain why a perfectly good

Almighty, and all-knowing God permits evil.

Habakkuk wants to know why?

He stands watch and waits for God to answer.

And God answers!

Habakkuk 2:3 (CEV)

³At the time I have decided, my words will come true.

You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting—it will happen!

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Wait a minute!

Is that the answer we're looking for?

Wait? Be patient?

Salvation will come?

Wait for it?

Uh-uh!

This is where I have a problem with God!

What Are We Waiting For?

I look around, as did Habakkuk

And I see terrible injustices . . .

I see horrible things happening . . .

I see ignorance overwhelming truth . . .

And I think, can it get any worse?

And I pray for God to intercede!

“How long, Lord, will you allow this to continue?”

And what I hear

From our all-loving, all-powerful God

Is to be patient?

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Unfortunately for us who are believers in God

Waiting is a part of faith.

It is a spiritual discipline, whether we like it or not.

As God says in Habakkuk

The righteous shall live by faith . . .

Faith that God in his infinite wisdom

Will guide the course of history to its redemptive end.

And so, what are we waiting for?

Ultimately, we are waiting for salvation!

For God to save us from our untenable circumstances.

For peace on earth, good will toward all!

To bring peace and justice to a world gone mad!

What Are We Waiting For?

The righteous shall live by faith . . .
Faith that God has the final word!

That's what we are waiting for!

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Which brings us to Advent.

As did Habakkuk, we find ourselves in turbulent times.

The Season of Advent teaches us to wait.

I don't know about you
But I struggle a bit with Advent.

Just what are we waiting for?

Are we waiting for Jesus to be born?

2000 years ago Jesus was born!
So every year we celebrate his birthday?

But wait! There's another aspect to this.

In Advent, we also wait for Jesus to be spiritually born.

That somehow, with a spiritual birth within us
We can experience the peace and joy
That saves and sustains through life and death.

With the Spirit's presence with us
We can help to bring about the changes
We have been so longingly waiting for?

But wait! There's yet another aspect to all of this.

What Are We Waiting For?

In Advent, we also wait for Christ to come again
In the Second Advent or what's called the Parousia.

The time when God redeems and restores all of creation.

The Season of Advent is a season of waiting.

What are we waiting for?
We wait for the Messiah.

The Catholics speak of it this way:

Christ comes in history
Christ comes in mystery
And Christ comes in majesty.

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In Advent, we prepare to celebrate Christ's historical birth.

An event that happened on the timeline of history.

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In Advent, anticipate Christ to come in mystery.

To be born again in our hearts
Here, in this present age
Through the presence of his Spirit.

His birth is a spiritual birth within.

~

And in Advent, we anticipate Christ coming in majesty
To complete the work of God's
Final act of redemption in history.

In Advent, we are to recognize Christ coming
In history, in mystery, and in majesty.

What Are We Waiting For?

We currently live between the first and the second coming.

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The beginning of God's final act of redemption
Is in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels, shepherds, and wise men recognized it.

The end of God's final act of redemption on earth
Reaches its completion when Christ comes again.

In the meanwhile . . . we wait

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But waiting is not a passive thing.
As you might expect from the definition of the word.

We are not to sit around waiting for God to intervene.

Waiting is an active thing.

Christ is with us!

From Frederick Buechner

“So to wait for Christ to come in his fullness is not just a passive thing, a pious, prayerful, churchly thing. On the contrary, to wait for Christ to come in his fullness is above all else to act in Christ's stead as fully as we know how. To wait for Christ is as best we can to be Christ to those who need us to be Christ to them most and to bring them the most we have of Christ's healing and hope because unless we bring it, it may never be brought at all.”

So while we wait for God's kingdom
We continue to work of Jesus
Peacefully, simply and together.

What Are We Waiting For?

We work to overcome poverty, division and despair

By sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

And even though turbulent times are with us

Though violence and injustice is all around

We will, as Habakkuk reminds us in our last passage

Continue to trust in the God of history,

Mystery, and majesty.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (TLB)

¹⁷Even though the fig trees are all destroyed, and there is neither blossom left nor fruit; though the olive crops all fail, and the fields lie barren; even if the flocks die in the fields and the cattle barns are empty, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will be happy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹The Lord God is my strength; he will give me the speed of a deer and bring me safely over the mountains.

So what are we waiting for?