



## Advent (Part 2) – Waiting Well

Jamin Roller – December 10, 2017

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**Matt Chandler:** Good morning. It's good to see you. I get the privilege of introducing to you Jamin Roller. Jamin Roller is at our Plano Campus. Some of you might know him. He was here with us for a long time before Plano cherry-picked among our best staff members here at FloMo. Jamin is an excellent communicator, but better than that, he's a really anointed man of God. So if you're a good communicator with good insight and then the Holy Spirit anoints you, that's a real gift to the church, a real gift to the Plano Campus. Will you guys welcome Jamin as he's going to come out and teach our second week of Advent?

**Jamin Roller:** Good morning, and Merry Christmas. Turn in your Bibles to Luke, chapter 1, and we'll start together in verse 46. As you're turning there, I just want you to know that outside of a godly mom and a godly dad, I don't know of an influence in my walk with the Lord as meaningful and impactful as The Village Church.

So to be not just a staff member but a member here and to have been a member here for some time is incredibly special, an objective evidence of God's grace in my life. I say all that because I want you to know I'm really humbled by that introduction, humbled to be here with you this morning. God is truly kind to me in that.

My wife and I are in a season of waiting. Last August we drove down to the beach and met some friends down there for a week of vacation. We get to the house, and I start unloading the van and pulling out suitcases, and it doesn't take me long to realize I'm doing it all by myself. I'm unloading all of these suitcases and all of this stuff by myself. I had been on the road with my family for two days, so I was in a really good place spiritually, and I start to, in my heart, get frustrated. Where is my wife, and why isn't she helping me?

All of a sudden, she comes out of the house, grabs me by the hand, and takes me down to the beach. We sit on some steps that are right there at the edge of the beach, and she says, "I'm pregnant." We

have two older kids, so this is our third, and immediately we enter into a season of waiting. From that day, looking at that day when we hear that good news, looking forward to the day at the end of April, beginning of May, when we will welcome our new baby, and we're in this season of waiting.

What I want you to know is that we, as a family, want to wait well, which means we're doing things to wait well. We announced it shortly to our two older kids there on the beach. We told them, "Hey, there's a baby in Mommy's belly." My son, who's 6, responded as you'd think. He said, "Yay!" and he gave my wife a hug, and my little girl, who's 4, looked at me and said, "Dad, that's really weird." I said, "Well, actually, you have no idea how weird it is." We want to wait well.

Part of waiting well for us means we found out the gender, found out we're having a little baby girl. Some friends of ours said, "You really should wait until the day the baby is born to find out the gender; it's more of a surprise that way," but that is not my wife at all. There's something she values more than being surprised, and that is being prepared. So we found out we're having a little girl, and we're waiting. We're getting down all of the old baby stuff, and we're trying to make space, and we're talking through finances and plans and all of that.

I'm having serious conversations with my son. "Buddy, you're the only boy in the family, which means you have to get used to not getting your way. It's just a reality. You are the only brother, the oldest brother to two beautiful sisters, so you're going to have to learn how to fight. You're just going to. For Christmas we're going to get you some brass knuckles. We're going to watch *The Karate Kid*, and you're going to have to learn how to fight." Because we're trying to wait well. We want our waiting to be active. We don't want our waiting to be passive.

This is week two of *Advent*. Last week, Matt talked about the "already, not yet" reality we live in as Christians. There's so much that's already true, and then there's so much that's not yet, that we're waiting for, so we're living in that in-between. We look back on Jesus' birth and his life and his death and his resurrection and his ascension, and we look forward to the sin-shattering, hope-realizing day of his return. That makes us a people who are waiting, and we want to wait well. In fact, the Bible is going to tell us throughout that we are *called* as a people to wait well. Jesus says in Mark 13:

**"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in**

**charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."**

Our King Jesus says, "Don't waste your waiting." In the waiting there's a tendency, a danger to be lulled asleep. In our church, in our homes, we're in this season of Advent to remind us that we're a waiting people, but also to orient our hearts in such a way that we wait well. In our home, on the first day of December we start praying this Advent prayer.

We say, "Jesus, thank you for loving us and saving us from our sins. We are so glad you were born. Christmas is about you. Life is about you. We can't wait to see you again. Please come back soon," because we want to capture for our family, and we together want to capture with our church, that we are this waiting people, and we want to wait well.

We get a picture of this kind of faithful waiting from the lyrics of a song sung from the mouth of a young girl named Mary, who is right in the middle of one of the greatest events in human history. So here's Mary. She is a poor, working-class servant girl, and she is engaged to a poor, working-class carpenter. Mary would have been anywhere from 13 to 16 years old at this point, because that's about how old poor girls were in Galilee when they got engaged.

She is hoping in God. She's a Jew, a God-fearing Jew. She is waiting for the day when righteousness returns to the land, waiting for the day when God comes and executes justice on the pagan Roman Empire. She knows the prophecies. She knows what God has done. She's waiting for what God will do. One day, she is working or planning her wedding, and an angel shows up and says...

**"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."**

Mary says, "That's amazing. Help me understand, because I'm a virgin." He says, "Well, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. In fact, your relative Elizabeth, who has never been able to have kids, has conceived in her old age. Nothing is impossible with God." So Mary runs to be with Elizabeth, and

these two pregnant women, one pregnant before her time and the other pregnant after her time, gather together and marvel at God.

In her marveling, Mary opens her mouth and sings a song from a heart that has waited well. Here's what's true that we'll see about her heart: she waits well because she knows she is God's servant, she knows God is her Savior, and she knows she's caught up in God's story. That's where we're going. Look at verse 46.

**"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.'"**

One of the things Mary says is "I'm God's servant." It's the same thing she said to Gabriel when he shared the news with her. That is an astounding response if you think about Mary's circumstances, if you think about the things she has been planning and thinking through. She had a lot to lose and a lot to worry about because of this news. Being a 15-year-old pregnant virgin engaged to be married to a man who at least knows the baby isn't his... That's a lot to worry about.

We're a waiting people, and in our waiting none of us wait with empty hands. None of us. We've all been given things by God. Jobs and gifts and people and responsibilities and talents and the spouse you have or the children you have or the circumstances you're in right now have been given to us by God. There are two ways to view what we hold in our hands. There are two ways to view what God has given us.

First is that we are God's servants, and as God's servants we are stewards of what he has given us. "God, this is yours. My job, my family, my future, the circumstances I'm in right now...they are yours. Help me to steward them well. Help me to represent you well." All the while praying, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The other way to view the things we've been given is to say that we are god, and as god we expect to be served by what has been given, because we falsely believe we earned it or are entitled to it. "These people exist for me. This job, my plans exist for me, so my kingdom come and my will be done, as I try to create on earth a self-exalting, self-indulgent version of heaven, and that's what I'm waiting for."

Mary says, "I'm God's servant." She chooses the first option, and what we have to see is that because her heart says, "I'm God's servant," because that's how she waits, what is missing from her response? Fear and worry. It would have been so natural for Mary to sing, "I hope you know what you're doing, God, because I am really nervous about how Joseph is going to react. I'm really nervous about what my parents are going to think. Not to mention, God, I *am* a child, and I have no idea how to raise a child in this world, much less how to raise the child who *made* the world."

It would have been so easy for this to sound much less like a Christmas song and much more like a sad country song or every single Nickelback song. But it's not a song of fear; it's a song of faith. Mary says, "I'm God's servant, so what I hold is ultimately not mine," which protected her from worry and freed her to worship. That's what she's doing.

When we say we're god and we look at the things God has given us as things that exist to serve us, we actually don't live for the day when we have all we want. Do you know what day we live for? We live for the day when we lose what we have. We're haunted by it. When Matthew tells the Christmas story, he talks about a guy named Herod. Herod was not a Jew, but he was appointed by Rome as the king of the Jews, and he was a man who believed he was god.

He built his kingdom through violence, bribery, and oppression, and as a result, he lived his life terrified of the day when he could lose it all. He gets called to a meeting with a guy named Augustus, who is the emperor of Rome, and he doesn't know what the meeting is about. So he orders for his wife to be executed while he's gone, because he could not stand the thought of her remarrying if anything happened to him.

He survives, she is killed, and he returns home and misses her so much he becomes temporarily insane. Toward the end of his life he had three of his sons killed because he was worried they would take his throne while he was still living. It's no wonder that one day when some wise men from the east walk into his palace and say, "Hey, we're here to worship the King of the Jews," and Herod says, "You're looking at him," and they say, "No, no, no, the one the Bible talks about. We saw the star. We've come to worship a baby in Bethlehem..."

So afraid that this is the day he has been dreading his entire life, he turns to his army and says, "I want you to go kill all of the baby boys in Bethlehem." Twenty to thirty baby boys. What history says about this man, not just the Bible but what history says, and I quote, "He died in Jericho unlamented by his family." What a tragic life. He was given much. He had many gifts, so much

power, so much authority, and was so driven by fear, so driven by idolatry, not only did he lose what he couldn't keep but he missed eternity in the process.

There's a danger in our waiting to look at what God has entrusted to us and instead of living as a servant or as a steward we live waiting for what we've been given to grow and live in fear that what we have we will one day lose. I understand that for us the struggle is not as extreme as maybe a guy like Herod. I get it. That's not you. But is it not the case that vying for greater and greater control of what we've been given only leads to greater and greater fear and frustration?

Not only that, but we need to know that fearing the day of loss has never actually prepared anyone to face the day of loss. The man or woman who stands firm when their business crumbles down around them is not the one who stands on the wreckage and says, "I knew this would happen." The one who stands firm on that day is the one who before the business even started said, "God, I'm your servant, and this is yours."

The mom and dad who grieve in faith unspeakable loss is the one who before the loss said, "God, every good and perfect gift comes from you." Knowing that we are God's servants and stewards of what he has given us does not protect us from the pain of loss. I'm not trying to say that. But hear me. It *does* protect us from the pain that comes from fearing loss that hasn't even happened. "What if? What would I do? How would I be okay?" No. "God, I'm your servant. Thank you for all that you let me hold. Thank you all the more for holding *me* if you ever take it away."

Mary sings this song, and it's that heart that leads her to sing out in faith instead of cower in fear. "God, I'm your servant." Then she says, "God, you are my Savior." The song goes, "I am a humble servant. Who's God? He is Lord. He is Savior, holy and mighty. And what do I think about my life? All generations will call me blessed. There is value and meaning in my life. Why? Because the Holy God who is my Savior looked upon me in love, and he has done great things for me." That phrase she says ("He looked upon") means God set his loving care on Mary.

The foundational value statement of every believer in this room is "God has done great things for me." It's why life has meaning. It's why life has purpose. The foundational value statement over all of us is, "God looked upon me. He set his loving care on me." When you are in your humble estate, your addicted state, your rebellious state, your sinful state, he turns his eyes toward you, uses his might for you, and saves you by grace through faith through Mary's son, Jesus.

When we wait with that kind of heart posture, "I am who I am because of what God has done for me," we wait well. What trips us up in our waiting is when we get that twisted. "I am who I am because of what I've done for God" or "I am who I am because of what I do for others." What's happening when we live like that is that we make this exchange. We are exchanging a relationship with Jesus for a relationship with an idealized version of who we think we should be.

So instead of, "God, here's what you've done for me. God, here's what you're going to do for me, and Jesus walks with me along the way..." Instead, we exchange that for this idealized picture, this standard we have of who we think we should be one day. My wife and I just sold our home, and we're trying to move closer to the Plano Campus. We live right now close to Prosper, which is basically Oklahoma, so we're trying to move closer to The Village Church Plano, and here's why.

The main reason is that we, as a family, have pushed all of our chips in with The Village Church Plano. We know we're the next campus that will one day be a church, and God has so tethered our hearts to the people in Plano. They are a special, selfless people who constantly teach me what it looks like to love the Lord sacrificially, to love one another boldly, to be courageous, to suffer well. Our hearts are just tethered to them, and the longer I'm there, the more that's true.

I believe God is doing something special among us there, and I believe and trust in the leadership of Hunter Hall and Adam Hawkins, so we are all in. We also sold our home because my wife is pregnant, and I thought adding a move into that would be really good for our marriage. And I was right. It's been easy. We've moved a few times now, and one of my closest friends is our realtor, so he helped us prepare.

We knew one of the first steps was to get the house ready to show, which means it needs to be spotless. It needs to be staged. We want people to come in and be able to see themselves living there. Not to see *us* living there but to be able to see *themselves* living there. So we had to declutter. We decluttered every room, and we had all this stuff, so we gave this stuff away, and we threw this stuff away. What we had at the end of that was a lot of stuff still, so we stuffed that stuff into closets and took a lot of that stuff and put it in the garage, and then we started preparing our house.

What I realized we were doing throughout this process was trying to hide the fact that we lived there. If you came over to our house, what you'd experience on an average day is that there are dishes in the sink. There's cereal all over the floor, because my kids are super coordinated. There is a pair of chewed-up shoes on the living room floor because of the dog. That's life. But we don't want

people to come in and experience our home how we *actually* live; we want them to experience it how we *should* live.

So people start coming in. The day comes, and the house is ready, and we get a text. "People are coming in an hour to look at the home." So we put the dishes up, we vacuum the floors, we take the chewed-up shoes and throw them in the trash can, we load the dog in the car, and we leave. Then we come back and start living in our home again.

Then we get a text. "People are coming in an hour." So we put the dishes up, we vacuum the floor, throw away another pair of shoes, load the dog in the car, and leave. Then we come back, and we get a text. "People are coming in an hour." Put up the dishes, vacuum the floor, throw away the shoes, sell the dog on Craigslist, load up the car, and leave. It was exhausting spending just a few days living in our home trying to hide the fact that we live in our home.

There were times where we left and there was this level of panic. "Did we get everything out of the bathrooms? What if they open that closet door? What are they going to think? What if they open that one drawer in the kitchen that has old bills and old phones and packets of soy sauce? What are they going to think then?" You have that drawer. It was exhausting.

Is that not a picture of what life looks like when we find meaning and value in what we do for God and for others instead of what God has done for us? It has to be clean. When people encounter me, they need to encounter me in the way that's going to make me feel validated and valued, and they can't know I'm weak. They can't know I'm actually a sinful person or a limited person or a vulnerable person. Shove all of that in the closet, throw that in the garage, and freak out at the thought that somebody could open that door one day.

What's really going on, what I'm learning in my life, is that it is so much less about managing what people think about me that trips me up and so much more about relating in the day-to-day with this ideal picture I have of who Jamin should be. That's what I mean when I say we exchange that relationship with Jesus for that relationship with the ideal self. Who are we thinking about? Who is meeting us in those places of weakness? Who is talking to us?

What happens is it leads us to feel one of two ways. It leads us to feel like a failure in our sin, and then, maybe even trickier, it leads us to feel like a fraud in our success. If it has to be clean and I slip

up, if it has to be clean and I make a mistake, if it has to be clean and I sin, I don't meet myself in that moment with compassion; I meet myself in that moment with defeat. "Well, I knew it. It's who I am."

Or even in growth, in maturity... If somebody comes up to you and says, "You know what? You're maturing in Jesus. You're godlier now than you were. I see growth in your life," you immediately cut yourself off from that by thinking of all of the things that are in all of the rooms they don't know about. If it has to be clean and immediately your mind goes to the thing that "If you only knew..." and something in that moment whispers, "You're a fraud."

Somebody says, "You're a hard worker. You're good at your job," and you immediately think of the last time you felt lazy or the last time you missed something or overlooked something. What *is* that? Yeah, it's clean, but it's not as clean as it should be. Something whispers, "You're a fraud." "You're a good mom." "You're a good dad." Immediately, you think of your last parenting failure or your worst parenting failure.

In that moment, we're relating to this ideal picture of who we think we should be, how clean things should be, and something all along is whispering, "You're not that person. You're a fraud." Look. We all have work to do. We all have rooms that need to be cleaned out and need to continue to be cleaned out, but that's not what I was saying. The question is...*Who do you interact with in those moments?* Who are you thinking about?

I think so many of us are finding the answer to that question in an idealized picture of who we should be that doesn't even exist, but Jesus does. That's the good news of the season. It's Immanuel, God with us. He says, "I'm with you always, even to the end of the age," and he knows. If the song in our waiting is, "God, you've done great things for me," then I'm not waiting for the day that I fail. I'm not waiting for the day that I'm found out.

I'm looking back at the day I was justified, forward to the day where I'll be glorified, knowing that every day in between I'm being sanctified by loving and following Jesus, and that's not exhaustion; that's freedom, because Jesus is kinder to us than we are to ourselves. He puts his arm around you and holds you by the hand, and you walk through the house together.

When you come to the messes, he asks you a question. "Which part of this is not covered by my blood? What is hiding in what room that is stronger than the one who's stronger than death?" He walks with us into our growth and says, "Don't shrink back from that. Don't cut yourself off from

that. No, you're not who you *will* be, but you're not who you *were*. Celebrate that that's my faithfulness in your life, and it's your obedient response to the fact that I initiated this love relationship with you." It's only fraudulent if we pretend like every room is already clean.

So Mary says, "My soul magnifies the Lord. From now on they'll call me blessed, not because of what I have done but because of what God has done for me. A holy God who is my Savior looked on me in love." Then in verse 50 her song changes a bit. She has said, "I am God's servant; God is my Savior," and then here we see that she's caught up in God's story.

**"And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

Do you hear the story she told? Her reality is that the world she lives in is run by men who have so much power and so much wealth and so much might. The Bible is not saying that wealth is sinful, but the Bible *is* saying that those who have much money and much power combined with much pride generally leads to oppression and violence.

If you think about the scandals that dominate the news right now... You take those who have much money and much power and much pride... That doesn't, on average, lead to righteous living and good decision making. This is Mary's reality, and into that reality she tells a story. You notice that she doesn't tell any of the false stories we talked about two weeks ago. She doesn't talk about consumerism.

How silly would that have been for a poor peasant girl in an economy that gave her no opportunity for upward movement to tell the story of consumerism? It's not like she could go to Nazareth Community College and make a better life for herself. That wasn't an option for her. She doesn't tell the story of nationalism. She was part of the bottom 90 percent that had no control over the affairs of the state, and the top 10 percent who did had mostly sold their souls to Rome.

She doesn't say secularism or progressivism. She doesn't tell the story of cynicism. You say, "Oh, well, that's because she saw an angel." Maybe. Zechariah saw an angel, and he was in the temple,

one of only a few people who were allowed to go into that sacred space. In that sacred space he's met by an angel, and the angel says, "You're going to have a son," and he says, "I'm really close to the presence of God, and I see this angel, and it's just not possible."

So the angel says, "The next word you speak will be a word of faith" and shuts his mouth until his son is born. We need to be careful in thinking that faith would come easier for us if we could only see what they saw. Cynicism is often more a matter of pride and fear and less a matter of evidence and experience.

She doesn't tell any of those stories. They're just as bankrupt for Mary as they are for us. She tells the true story. She says, "A reversal has come," and that's the story. The true story of the world is that Jesus Christ is the true Lord of the world, and because of that truth, a great reversal has begun. She tells that reversal story. The rich are made empty while the hungry are filled. That's a reversal. She says the exalted are humbled and the humbled are exalted. There's this reversal.

The whispers of this reversal are all throughout the Old Testament. Amos says that justice will roll down like waters, and Isaiah says the ruthless will be put to an end because all the world will be full of the knowledge of God. Then that reversal story meets Mary personally. "God looks on me in love. I was a nobody. Now all generations will call me blessed." That reversal visits her, but she says, "It's not just for me; it's for the whole world."

The Herods of the world will be brought low, and the Marys of the world will be lifted up. The poor are filled. She sings that song, and then what happens in her life? She kept being poor. She had to give birth to Jesus in a barn. She kept being poor. "But I thought the poor were filled." Then she lives the first three years of her son's life running from a guy named Herod. "I thought he was supposed to be humbled. I thought the mighty were going to fall."

The reversal story for Mary is just like the reversal story for us. It's here and it's not. It's already and it's not yet. It's kind of like Christmas. Right now we're a few weeks out from Christmas. Sorry if that makes you anxious, but right now we're a few weeks out from Christmas, and it's here. The lights are up. The tree is up. It's Christmas, but it's not, because we're waiting for the day. The sights and the sounds are all here. People act differently.

I went to Starbucks the other day, went through the drive-through, ordered my drink, and when I got to the window the lady came up and said, "Hey, the car in front of you paid for your drink," and I

thought, "That's strange." It caught me off guard. "Oh wait. It's Christmas." This happened to me last year during Christmas. Then I thought, "Okay, well, I want to pay for the car behind me," and then immediately looked in my rearview mirror to see what I just committed to. "Please don't be a minivan full of people."

I got my drink and drove off, and I thought, "Man, I love this season." Then I turned into the street, and it's full of cars, and everyone is going somewhere, and it's a normal workday. Businesses aren't shut down like they will be on Christmas. The streets aren't empty like they will be on Christmas. Why? Because it's Christmas, but it's not.

The reversal has come. It's come in your life. It's come in my life. It's come for our church. It's come for our world, and it hasn't. Isn't that hard? A great source of frustration, confusion, and pain as Christians is living in that tension. One of the great temptations in our waiting is to want to control the timing of the reversal. "God, thank you so much for the 'already,' and I would like the 'not yet' right now." We can grow cold. Our hearts can grow bitter.

Some of us are mad at God for not delivering on promises he never made. Jesus says, "If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you." What God says is the waiting is difficult. Some of you might be thinking that God baited you with grace and then switched it with suffering, but the Bible throughout is going to prepare us that the waiting is difficult. It is confusing. Paul says it's like labor pains, which I hear hurt pretty badly.

When the reversal does not come automatically for Mary, she does something that's really surprising. When she keeps being poor, keeps being oppressed, she responds, and she keeps singing. Throughout her life, she keeps singing this song. There's a guy named Scot McKnight. He's a New Testament scholar, and he wrote a book on Mary, and in his book on Mary he talked about this song. He walked through this song and traced this song through the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of James, Mary's other son.

Mary in the song says, "All generations will call me blessed, and the hungry are filled." Jesus stands in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and in Luke 6 and says, "Blessed are the hungry, for they will be filled." Mary sings this song. She says, "God has brought down the mighty and has exalted the humble," and her other son James in the fourth chapter of his letter says, "Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

Where did they hear that? From their mom. Because she kept singing. I know Jesus is God, but the Bible says in Luke that Jesus grew in knowledge. The Old Testament was one of his teachers, and another one of his teachers was his mom. One of the ways she taught was telling the story in her home, telling them this story with this song, even while she was still waiting for the story to come true. "My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices. He looked on me in love. The hungry are filled. The mighty will fall. The reversal has come."

I don't think it's a stretch to think that she came back to this song throughout her life. One day she goes to this house. Jesus is growing in popularity. He's growing in hostility. People are making threats against his life. He's teaching in this house, and she goes to the house and demands to talk to him. Maybe she's going to ask him to tone it down a bit. She gets turned away. She leaves, and surely she's confused, and surely there's some doubt, and we can all understand that.

She walks away from that house. "My soul magnifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices. He looked on me in love. The hungry are filled, the mighty will fall, the reversal has come, and, God, help me understand, because right now it doesn't really look like I thought it would look." She's in Jerusalem the night Jesus is arrested, and all throughout his trial she's there. So one night in Jerusalem she goes to bed. She knows it does not look good for her son, and she can't sleep.

So maybe she says, "My soul magnifies the Lord. You looked on me in love. The hungry are filled, the mighty will fall, the reversal has come, and, God, do something for him. I trust you with his life, but do something for him." John tells us that she's at the cross, one of only a few disciples who follow Jesus all the way to his darkest day. She sits there and watches her firstborn experience a pain she can't take away. He dies and is taken down, and John grabs her by the hand and says, "Jesus told me to take care of you, so we need to go home."

She walks away, and maybe she can't sing. Maybe she doesn't, but she doesn't have to wait long for the great reversal of the resurrection when Jesus comes out of the tomb. He leaves death behind, because now death's days are numbered. He is risen and victorious, and surely when she embraced her son, the risen King, she said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices. You looked on me in love. The hungry are filled, the mighty will fall, the reversal has come, and, God, I now know what I couldn't see."

She lives the rest of her days as one of the first members of the church that Jesus, her son, is the head of. A faithful life, someone who was marked by a confidence in what God has done and what

God will do. What would it look like for us to have something like that in our waiting, something like that song, something that gets us caught up in the story no matter what's going on in our lives, something that could sustain us through all of the different seasons and all of the different highs and lows? It's *this*. You're doing it.

You're in different places in your waiting right now. For some of you, you walked in this weekend, and the reversal feels really close to you. You have a lot that's right on the tip of your tongue to celebrate, so you walked in and you sang and prayed and you were eager to hear God's Word and you will take Communion in just a few minutes. Then for some of you in your waiting, the reversal feels really far away. You came in, and you're grieving loss. You're grieving disappointment.

You sang, and you're here in the courage it takes to even be here in your sorrow, or you came in and this week you were just beat up by sin or beat up by self, and you're here. It's this mechanism that God is using for us to get caught up in the story again. As I say that and as you think, "That is everybody else; he's not talking to me," don't listen to the whisper that calls you a fraud. Jesus is kinder to you than that, and we're caught up in the story again together.

That catching up in the story together is going to remind us we're his servants, he's our Savior, and there is a story he has invited us into that is compelling enough for our greatest ambition, strong enough to handle our strongest doubt, and it is the only story in all the world that can turn our sorrow into hope, and we've been invited into that. So may we wait well.

My wife being pregnant again reminds me that not only am I waiting, but there's a day that's coming when I will view the waiting differently than I do now, and that's when the baby is born. When I think about when we were waiting for Asher, my oldest, I think about that waiting now, on the other side of his birth, and I see that waiting through the lens of knowing him, holding him, raising him, and being in relationship with him, because to see him now in the flesh is to view the waiting differently.

I know that's coming for this baby, but how much more true will that be when Jesus returns, when we see our Savior face-to-face and look back at all of this waiting, the darkest days, the phone calls we wish we could unhear, the mountaintops, and all the victory and success? We look back on that then through the lens of seeing him face-to-face, that the reversal is done and all we have left to do is enjoy King Jesus forever.

Let's wait faithfully for that day, and maybe we'll sing, "My soul magnifies the Lord. You looked on me in love. You saved me when I was just a child" or "You saved me in my later years, and you sustained me through so much, and now you're here, and I magnify you, Jesus." Let's wait well. Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for loving us and saving us from our sins. We are so glad you were born. Jesus, Christmas is about you. All of life is about you. We can't wait to see you again. Please come back soon. Would you, by your Spirit, surround us and embolden us to wait as servants, to confess with our lives, God, you are our Savior, and to discipline ourselves to gather as your people, to open your Word, so we would be caught up again in your story, O God? We're waiting. We love you. Amen.

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