Psalms For All Seasons - Part Three

# I Wait For The Lord

## (Psalm 130:5)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church on this first Sunday of December. We’ve been studying from the book of Psalms, and we are discovering that this is really a book for every season of our lives. In the first week, we learned that we can trust the Lord in whatever season we are in because the Lord knows. In week two, we learned that the Lord is our Shepherd in every situation of life. And last week, we celebrated with Rabbi Neal Surasky as he taught us about the anticipation of Israel; looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

And so, we find ourselves in this season called Advent, the four Sundays preceding Christmas, and these weeks of Advent help us to remember and focus on Jesus as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, as well as looking ahead with anticipation to his coming again. In Psalm chapter 130, verse five, the psalmist said it this way,

“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his Word, I put my hope” (Psalms 130:5).

Now, obviously our waiting today is different because we live on this side of the cross. Jesus Christ has already come, but Advent is really a time for us to renew our desire for the Lord every day, as we look ahead to his triumphant second coming in glory. Peter said it this way,

“As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:12).

And so, we are waiting for the Lord and Advent invites us to enter into times of deeper prayer and reflection, reading of the Scriptures, and worshiping as we contemplate the greatness of our Lord.

Now, during this time of year, we naturally gravitate toward some passages like Matthew’s genealogy, or Luke chapters one and two, as well as the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and others. But the Psalms are also a great source of comfort and encouragement in this season because as the psalmist said,

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy” (Psalms 126:3).

And we most certainly are filled with joy as we gather together, remembering the great things that the Lord has done for us, as well as preparing ourselves for his second coming in glory.

The Psalms themselves have been a source of consolation for God’s people for thousands of years because these are their song as they were waiting for Christ to come. And so, they sang of their experiences, their questions, their sorrows, and their hope. As the psalmist said,

“My whole being waits, and in his Word, I put my hope” (Psalms 130:5).

And it’s in the Psalms that we read the story of God’s redemption. We remember how he worked in his people from the beginning of time, with all of their wins and their losses, their sorrows and their triumphs, and we see how God repeatedly delivered them over and over again.

In a similar way, the apostle Paul tells us in the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians,

“In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:4-5).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

In other words, the apostle reminds us that as we are waiting, we must recognize that God moves according to the big picture, working out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

And so, while you might be praying to God about a certain situation, the Bible tells us that God already has a plan that will affect generations. In other words, you may be wondering why you are in that place, why you’re doing what you’re doing, or why you are going through what you are going through, but the truth is that God didn’t put you there for you, he positioned you in that place for your descendants, because he thinks generationally.

Let me illustrate it to you from the Scriptures, because this is important to our understanding. The Lord said to Abraham in Genesis chapter 15, verse 13,

“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own… they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years… afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14).

And so, the Lord had a plan for Abraham’s family that stretched out over four centuries. That’s how far he is looking ahead, and yet many of us are worrying about tomorrow, next week, or next month when God already has a 400-year strategy implemented. We get so focused on our immediate comfort, seeking to satisfy our desires, striving to live out our 5, 10, or 20-year plans, that we fail to recognize the omniscience of God’s divine strategy.

In other words, God may not be working things out specifically according to your will. I know you may not like to hear that, but the Bible says that he is a God…

“Who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

That’s hard to accept in a narcissistic culture where everybody thinks everything is about themselves; but it’s really not, it’s about the will of God. In fact, the Bible says,

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14).

In other words, our prayers and our seasons of waiting must be prefaced by times of deep soaking in the presence of God, studying the Scriptures so that we’re able to pray according to his perfect will.

I know this is a difficult message for a generation of people who live in a microwave culture and want instant gratification. But we are so spoiled today, we don’t want to work for it, we don’t want to wait on it, and we expect God to be on demand like our own personal genie in a bottle. In other words, we want what we want, when we want it, but God told Abraham,

“Your descendants will be… enslaved and mistreated four hundred years… and afterward they will come out with great possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14).

Today, we don’t want to wait for the “afterwards,” if it doesn’t happen quickly, we get frustrated and angry with God. And yet, God was God before any of the things that we take for granted now. In other words, he was God before Google, before Microsoft, before technology, and yet we sit down and watch the news like God is still trying to figure out what to do.

I know it’s crazy in the world right now, there is chaos everywhere, not just politically, but economically and personally. And yet, we have to acknowledge that in the midst of all the drama that God is up to something. And that’s why the psalmist said,

“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his Word, I put my hope” (Psalms 130:5).

But it’s not easy to wait, it’s not easy to have hope when everything you see is opposite of what you hoped for. That’s why we need to go to the Scriptures first, “In his word I put my hope,” and so I don’t need to go to my phone first thing in the morning for updates.

“In his word I put my hope” because God’s got it covered, everything is under control, and he has determined the end from the beginning. In other words, the Bible says, it’s predestined,

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

And so, the Holy Spirit is telling us that these things we are worried about are already in place. In other words, they have been set, they are secure, because God is working on something, and he’s got at the very least a 400-year strategy.

Meanwhile, we are on our phones, watching the news, reading about something that is situational and temporal, but the psalmist said, “My whole being waits for the Lord, and in his Word, I put my hope.” In other words, he has a biblical perspective, a believer’s perspective, regardless of what Fox News is saying, regardless of what CNN is saying, regardless of what is going on out in the streets, because our hope is in the Lord. And therefore, we can say with confidence,

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, and he leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:1-2).

And so, my hope is in the Lord, I put my trust in his Word, because he is my shepherd, and he has me in the right place at the right time. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me where blessings will flow, and we need to remember that God has it all under control. You see, he’s got everything covered, he’s got the provision, and I shall not be in want.

The book of Psalms is the Word of God, it’s a book of hope, it’s a book of historical significance, and we can turn to it and remember the mighty acts of God in our time of need. Like the Israelites as they were standing at the Jordan River, preparing to cross over into the Promised Land, they were uncertain because this wasn’t the way that Moses did it. However, they remembered what God did in the past because they sang Psalms about it. Like Psalm chapter 114 says,

“When the Israelites escaped from Egypt, when the family of Jacob left that foreign land… The Red Sea saw them coming and hurried out of their way” (Psalm 114:1, 3).

And so, they remembered what happened in the past, and recognized that God was doing something new.

Now, for most of the year, the Jordan River was only about one hundred feet wide; but in the spring, at this time of year, the river overflowed its banks and became a mile wide. But the Bible says, as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge. As soon as they took a step of faith, as soon as they put their feet into the water, the psalmist said,

“The water of the Jordan River turned away… What happened, Jordan River, that you turned away? … Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord” (Psalms 114:3,5,7; NLT).

And so, they remembered that the Lord was in control, and he told the water when to roll back and when to return, and everything worked out precisely as God planned. But here is my point, when the whole nation had completed crossing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, “I want you to get something out of this, right in the middle of what you were going through, right there where the priest stood,

“Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight” (Joshua 4:3, NLT).

In other words, the Lord said, “I’m going to turn your miracle into a memorial,” because they needed to remember, this was their history. And this is so important, it just looked like a pile of rocks, but this was a witness, a testimony, proving to the world that God made a way where there was no way. And in the same way,

“Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing” (Joshua 4:9, NLT).

Both of these piles of stones were set up as memorials of Israel’s crossing of the Jordan River. They are witnesses to future generations, reminders of what God did for his people, because their children and their grandchildren needed to know that they have been through some stuff and that God was with them every step of the way.

These piles of stones were memorials, monuments, stones of remembrance, a continual reminder as the psalmist said,

“You brought us to a place of abundance… God has surely listened

and heard my voice in prayer” (Psalms 66:12,19).

And in the same way, the Word of God is a “stone” of remembrance. It is not just 12 stones, but 66 stones, two piles, to heaps of stones comprising the Old and New Testament, memorials recounting Israel’s history, remembering what God has done, and teaching future generations.

And that is the value of this season of Advent, like the book of Psalms, it is beckoning us to remember that in our waiting our God is near and not far off. That he is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalms 46:1). And so, we learn to wait with anticipation, expectant with hope, both looking back at what Christ has done, and looking forward to his coming again in glory.

In fact, Jesus declared, he said himself, “Peter on this rock, on your faith, on your testimony,” he said,

“On this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18).

And I want to go even deeper because I feel like somebody is struggling with where they came from and where they are now. In other words, you have dreams and aspirations, you’ve been praying about it, and so I want to help you understand the value of waiting. The Bible says,

“Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory” (Colossians 3:2-4, NLT).

Perspective is important, and so instead of just being focused on your immediate situation, you want to be able to see your life from a divine or panoramic perspective.

In the beginning, in Genesis, God used the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to transform the thinking of the world. And when you understand the Pentateuch, understanding the first five books of the Old Testament, understanding the story of Creation, Noah’s flood, the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the redemption of God’s people from slavery in Egypt, as well as the establishment of his kingdom on earth, it gives us a foundation for our own lives to be built on.

Moses spoke of this in Deuteronomy chapter 29, saying,

“He will establish you as his people and confirm that he is your God, just as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Deuteronomy 29:13, NLT).

And I know they were far from perfect, but through them God scattered a holy remnant of people all over the world. The Lord began by calling Abraham out of a culture of polygamy, idolatry, and every form of debauchery, changing his family narrative, setting new standards, and breaking the yoke of yesterday.

The first thing God had to do in Abraham as he moved out and began blazing a new trail in the story of redemption was to produce a seed. In order to do that, he had to wait until Abraham could no longer produce a seed, waiting until Abraham’s body was as good as dead. After that period of waiting, when it had become an impossibility, God gave Abraham the promise of a seed.

“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18,

NKJV).

And so it was that when that seed was planted in the dead womb of Sarah, God brought it back to life, it was revived, and Matthew tells us,

“Thus, there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ” (Matthew 1:17).

In other words, it was 42 generations later that a virgin named Mary gave birth to a son. The crowds protested saying,

“Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David?” (John 7:42, NKJV).

But the Lord Jesus goes back even further and said, “I am the seed of Abraham.” He said,

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad…" (John 8:56).

And so, the promise was spoken to Abraham and to his seed, referring to his child, not to his children. But the Lord said, “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

We know that Jesus was the seed of Abraham, because when he hit the dead womb of Sarah, he brought it back to life. And so, while everybody else was trying to figure out how this old woman got a baby, we know it was because Jesus is…

“The resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

And so, when Jesus gets into dead stuff, whether a womb or a tomb, he will bring life where there was no life at all. And so, when Jesus gets into dead wombs, dead marriages, dead homes, or dead businesses, he shouts,

“Come out!” (John 11:43).

Because he is the resurrection and the life. And so, he can bring life where there wasn’t any life.

And so, Abraham is given a seed, he passes it to Isaac, because God said,

“In Isaac your seed shall be called” (Genesis 21:12, NKJV).

Now, Isaac was their miracle baby, he was the completeness of their joy, an absolute delight. In fact, his name means “laughter” because when the Lord told Abraham that she would be having a son, he made the old woman burst out in laughter. She said,

“After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" (Genesis 18:12).

And she did, at the appointed time, all was accomplished, but it was complicated. In spite of Abraham’s weaknesses, in spite of the whole thing with Hagar, in spite of Ishmael, Isaac was the son of the promise. He grew up and was blessed, he was a virtuous young man, and even though he was old enough to resist the will of his father. The Bible says that Abraham,

“Bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood” (Genesis 22:9).

And so, we know that Isaac wasn’t a little boy, he was old enough to carry the wood up the mountain for the fire, and yet he was obedient to the will of his father. He laid down on the altar, spread out on top of the wood, just like Jesus laid down on the cross, Isaac…

“He humbled himself and became obedient to death” (Philippians 2:8).

As the Scripture said, “in Isaac your seed shall be called,” and he was a type of Christ. Isaac laid there as his father Abraham raised his hand to slay him. Isaac was obedient to death, even as Jesus cried out,

"Abba, Father… take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36).

Like Jesus, Isaac knew that it would have been better not to be born, then to be born and not to do the will of his father.

You see, it all started so long ago in the first chapters of Genesis, but there is something about the blood. You know, it seemed like a mistake, an accident, but God never lost control of the situation, he knew what he was doing. The prophet Isaiah said,

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4).

And God had a plan before the foundation of the world, he declared that the solution would be the seed, the offspring of a woman. He told Satan, that serpent of old,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed” (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

And from that moment there has been the spilling of blood. The Lord sacrificed an animal, making garments of skin for Adam and his wife and he clothed them. From the very first sin in the garden there was a foreshadowing of Christ, the shedding of blood, and the covering of our sinfulness.

We see it again when Abel offered a lamb to God, giving him a blood sacrifice, and ended up with himself being offered up as a type of Christ at the hands of his wicked brother Cain. Over the next several thousand years everything that happened would be a shadow of what God was preparing to do for mankind. That’s what we see in Isaac, the seed of Abraham was a shadow and a type of Christ. But God himself provided a substitute, because the Lamb of God was Jesus Christ.

In fact, the Bible says in Galatians chapter three,

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

And so, it all happened the way it was supposed to happen, God is still in charge, all hope is not lost, because Jesus Christ is the one who holds everything together. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Centerpiece, the Cornerstone, the Alpha and the Omega, and everything is playing out as Ephesians chapter 1 says,

“According to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11).

And so, it shall come to pass, maybe not quite the way you planned, but you’ve got something else deep down inside of you, and as you offer yourself as a living sacrifice God is going to get the victory.

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