

Paradox- an apparently self-contradictory, yet true, statement or situation

- "Youth is wasted on the young"
- "Less is more"
- "The only constant is change"
- "You have to spend money to make money"

Per.Ex: The **best** thing about being a dad: seeing your kids grow up and become more independent
The **worst** thing about being a dad: seeing your kids grow up and become more independent

The Bible is full of paradoxes:

**the last shall be first; to find life you must give up your life; the humble shall be exalted;
more blessed to give than receive; God chooses the weak to shame the strong, etc.**

The Christmas narrative is full of paradoxes:

**Creator enters His creation; Maker of Mary birthed by her; King of glory born poor;
Emmanuel= Holy God with sinful mankind; Mighty God as tender babe, etc.**

We will spend 3 weeks diving into some of these fascinating paradoxes of Christmas

TITLE & Paradox: **Waiting on the One who has Already Arrived**

Philippians 3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly **wait** for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We celebrate the coming of Jesus (Advent)...and yet live in this "NOW BUT NOT YET" paradox

If we pause to reflect on our own lives, we will find they are all marked with this reality of WAITING
The redemptive story of the Bible has always been one of waiting.

Quick Little Journey

Genesis 3 brought not only the fall of mankind, but the first promise of redemption

Genesis 3:15 I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

And the people waited, but no sign of him yet.

Then came a man named Abram; God promises to him, that through him, God will establish a Kingdom.

Abram waited; had a son in his old age, Isaac; Isaac waited; had son named Jacob (Israel); Jacob waited, but instead of a deliverer who would rescue them from the oppression of the curse, they became enslaved to Egypt

Eventually after 400 years, God delivers them from bondage in Egypt, and AGAIN gives them a reason to wait-
Numbers 24:17 I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will smash the forehead of Moab and strike down all the Shethites.

In the promised land, they waited; a period of judges, but no Savior; then a period of kings, but still no Savior.
One King would stand out, David. God promises to establish His Kingdom forever through him (**2 Sam 7**)

Eventually the people lose their way and God punishes them to exile in Assyria; but still, he tells them to wait

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him **Immanuel**.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of Armies will accomplish this.

Babylon Conquers Assyria, Persia conquers Babylon (they allow some Jews to go back), Greeks conquer Persia
God again tells them to wait-

Malachi 4:2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall.

But then- 400 years of prophetic silence! No signs, no commotion, just waiting. And waiting. And waiting.

Some of you may find yourself in a similar place. Waiting.

It's natural to become frustrated in the waiting.

"God, what are YOU waiting for?"

The marriage doesn't seem to get better;

The job/ company situation doesn't seem to be changing;

Love doesn't seem to be coming for you;

You're waiting for the strength/ resilience/patience it takes to live your life, but it L.I.T.

The people of the Bible felt the same way

Isaiah 49:14-15 Zion says, "The Lord has abandoned me; the Lord has forgotten me!" (*exiled Israel*)

¹⁵ "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion for the child of her womb?

Even if these forget, yet **I will not forget you**.

Here's how the silence of those 400 years is broken when we open up the pages of the N.T.

Matthew 1:1-16 (READ)

Here's the 1st simple but profound truth I hope we grasp today;

It's not gonna blow you out of the water, but it will anchor you in the darkness of the storm:

God is ALWAYS working while we wait

Messiah was coming, but first God had to get childless Abram to become a father to a nation, he had to turn the heart of a prostitute named Rahab, who would birth and raise a righteous son named Boaz, God had to get a Moabite widow named Ruth to cross paths with Boaz, they would be great grandparents of a boy named David who was tending sheep...God had to get him to the palace (1st remove the wicked king), God had to work with David's absolute & utter failure of adultery at best, rape at worst, He used Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, to give birth to a wise man, Solomon, who would build a temple for God, He would work through evil kings after, and move other nations to punish and purify His people, Assyria-Babylon-Persia-Greece-Rome, who for the first time in history built roads connecting the known world; ushered in one world language; peace & freedom of religion, so that eventually, as He always had promised, *Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah.*

Galatians 4:4-5 When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

God is ALWAYS working while we wait; Watch how this plays out in our context:

My dad's 1st prayer over me, a godly wife... while he waited-

God was allowing his wife's mental health to decline, forcing them to leave his lavish lifestyle behind to go the USA so she could be near her family, he scrubbed dishes, he worked odd jobs (after having had it all), God would move his family around, and in that chaos, the son the man prayed for would lose his way; when he eventually came to the Lord, he was on fire because he had seen the other side and did not want to go back; he started preaching, they started inviting him; eventually they invited him to go preach at this little church in this little town called Manteca, where there was a girl he secretly liked; she loved God more than any girl he had seen, and eventually, he *would* marry that girl, and God would answer in November 2015 the prayer a father had prayed in Mexico city back in June of 1987

Are you waiting? Rest assured God is always working. Let me say the same thing in a different way:

God is never idle in the life of a waiting worshiper

Simeon, a man whose life was one of waiting

Luke 2:25-32 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said, ²⁹ Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation. ³¹ You have prepared it in the presence of all peoples— ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel.

God had promised Him he would see the Messiah; But first He sends an Angel to Mary, then to Joseph to break the news to them that Mary will birth the long awaited Messiah; but the prophecy said the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, and they're in Nazareth; God had to first move the hand of Caesar Augustus to send a decree that all should be registered in their hometowns; When the baby is born and the time finally comes to present the baby in the temple, who happens to be there?

“While He's waiting, He's worshipping, and while He's worshipping, God is working”

Are you in a season of waiting? Have you done all that was in your power to do, and now you just wait?

Isaiah 64:4 From ancient times no one has heard, no one has listened to, no eye has seen any God except you who acts on behalf of the one who waits for him.

Our waiting might feel futile at times, but did you know that God is using your waiting, to bless others?

Psalm 40:1-3 I waited patiently for the Lord, and he turned to me and heard my cry for help.

²He brought me up from a desolate pit, out of the muddy clay, and set my feet on a rock, making my steps secure.

³He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. **Many will see and fear, and they will trust in the Lord.**

Here's the 2nd simple but powerful truth we need to grasp:

Our waiting is never a waste, because our trust while we wait is our testimony to the world

I think of Joseph, trusting God and not running out on Mary;

I think of the wise men, eagerly waiting for the sign, the star of Jacob, and making the long costly journey;

I think of the prophetess Anna, who saw Simeon worshipping after so much waiting, and she worshipped too

If you're single, trusting God & keeping yourself pure isn't a waste, it's a testimony;

If your relationship struggling, continuing to love someone who doesn't show you love and respect to someone who disrespects you, is not a waste, it's a testimony;

If you're struggling to make ends meet, but you know God doesn't want you to cheat the system or steal from work, your ethics are not a waste, they're a testimony;

If you're struggling with your health, wondering why God won't just heal you already, your waiting in pain is not a waste, it's a testimony

Here's the 3rd simple but profound truth we should grasp-

Waiting on God exposes our hidden weaknesses, so that God's strength can be revealed in us

Luke 1:5-7 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. ⁷But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.

One day Zach is doing his duty IN the tabernacle & he gets an angelic visit, which is very scary-

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

Remember Verse 6? How would you think such a standup guy would react?

Luke 1:18-20 "How can I know this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years." ¹⁹The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. (IOW, are you kidding me!) ²⁰Now listen. You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

Few things sanctify you like unanswered prayer;

Few things drive you into deep intimacy with Jesus, like waiting on God does;

Have you found that while you wait, you are prone to wander?

As I wait for my spouse to be better, I find that I'm not so great either,

As I wait for God to heal me physically, I find that I need spiritual healing more,

As I wait for God to change my current situation, I find that God is changing me through it

The life Jesus calls us is one of waiting (the farmer waits, the pregnant woman waits)

Recap:

- **God is always working in the life of a waiting worshipper**
- **Our waiting is never a waste, because our trust while we wait is our testimony to the world**
- **Waiting on God exposes our hidden weaknesses, so that God's strength can be revealed in us**

*****CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Christmas time celebrates the reality that the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world has come, while at the same time facing the reality that, we still are a people of waiting

Philippians 3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you are at the end of the rope today; tired of waiting; tired of the season you are in;
Your prayer is Paul's in 1 Corinthians 16- MARANATHA (Lord come quickly)

Isaiah 40:27-31 Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you assert,
"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my claim is ignored by my God"?

²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. ²⁹He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, ³¹but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.

INVITATION

If you are not-yet a Christian: **God has been waiting on you**

If you are among the saints: **Don't waste your wait**

Henri Nouwen-

"We wait during Advent for the birth of Jesus. We wait after Easter for the coming of the Spirit, and after the ascension of Jesus we wait for his coming again in glory.

We are always waiting, but it is a waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps."

PRAY

Bullpen-

During this Advent season, we are full of paradoxes ourselves:

Season of joy.... *we are stressed out of our minds*

Season of gratitude & giving... *our kids greediness comes out like no other time of the year*

Season of love... *we criticize, and we show contempt*

Season of worship.... *In all our preparations for xmas we didn't prepare our hearts to worship*

We live in the paradox of Now and Not yet- between the reality of what is, and is yet to be:

We are free from the penalty and power of sin now, but not yet from its presence

We are reconciled to God now, but not yet resurrected with Him

We have eternal life now, but we all must die

Waiting well means trusting that God knows

- what He is doing better than I do
- me better than I do (how long can I take this?)
- the best timing for my most blessing and His most glory

The Chinese bamboo tree is one of the most remarkable plants on earth. Once the gardener plants the seed, he will see nothing but a single shoot coming out of the bulb - for five full years! That tiny shoot, however, must have daily food and water. During all the time the gardener is caring for the plant, the exterior shoot will grow less than an inch.

At the end of five years, however, the Chinese bamboo will perform an incredible feat. It will grow an amazing ninety feet tall in only ninety days! Now ask yourself this: When did the tree actually grow? During the first five years, or during those last ninety days?

The answer lies in the unseen part of the tree, the underground root system. During the first five years, the fibrous root structure spreads deep and wide in the earth, preparing to support the incredible heights the tree will eventually reach.

An oak or a mushroom? It's been said that when God wants to grow mushrooms, he can do it overnight, but when he wants to grow a mighty oak, it takes a few years. What do we want to be, a mushroom or an oak? If we want to be an oak, it is well worth the wait.

Abraham waited, Sarah waited; Joseph waited; Moses waited; David waited; Jeremiah waited; Simeon waited; John waited; Martha waited; the disciples waited; we wait

Isaiah 55:8-11 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
and your ways are not my ways.”

This is the Lord's declaration.

⁹“For as heaven is higher than earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰For just as rain and snow fall from heaven
and do not return there
without saturating the earth
and making it germinate and sprout,

and providing seed to sow
and food to eat,
¹¹so my word that comes from my mouth
will not return to me empty,
but it will accomplish what I please
and will prosper in what I send it to do.”

JOHN

John MacArthur- *Did you know there is no way that Old Testament prophets could ever have understood the fullness of the coming Messiah just on the virtue of the apparent contradiction in their own prophecies? For example, a prophet would sit down, and the Holy Spirit would inspire him, and he would write that there was coming a conqueror who would rule the world, who would be the Savior and Deliverer of men. The same prophet would sit down later and write about a Man of Sorrow, who was lonely and rejected.*

The prophet would write a King of glory, a King of heaven, the eternal Savior, the desire of all nations. And then a prophet would sit down and write that there was no beauty that men would desire Him; and that He was a servant, bloody, suffering, crucified, and dead. How do you resolve these things? The prophet would write that He would come in flaming fire to take vengeance on His enemies. The other prophet would write that He would come preaching peace. And so the prophets couldn't even understand what they themselves wrote about Christmas. It was a paradox to them.

John the Baptist was caught in this paradox-

John 3:2 God's word came to him. To say what?

John 3:3; 7-17 proclaimed a baptism of repentance/ produce fruit consistent of repentance

John expected a fearful judge, a powerful ruler, a glorious king. And then Jesus showed up. Being merciful and loving and healing the sick and calling people to himself.

John 11:2-3 are you the one?

Jesus is the paradox of Christmas

“Instead of military might, they got the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9). Instead of slaying their enemies, He dies for them (John 3:16 Romans 5:10). Instead of raising the religious leaders to higher places of authority, he raises the weak and marginalized.”

Hurry up and wait

Matthew 1 the waiting/ slow pace/ waiting isn't a waste

Long wait for His first coming; long wait for his second coming

Three methods of flight: Ornithologists say birds have three methods of flight. Flapping is keeping their wings in constant motion, like a hummingbird, to counteract gravity. Flapping keeps them in the air, but it is a lot of work. Second is gliding. Here the bird builds up enough speed, then coasts downward a while. It is much more graceful than flapping, but unfortunately it does not get the bird very far. Reality in the form of gravity sets in quickly. Gliding is nice, but it does not last.

The third way is soaring. Only a few birds, such eagles, are capable of soaring. Eagles's wings are so strong that they are capable of catching rising currents of warm air - thermal winds that go straight up from the earth - and without moving a feather can soar up to great heights. Eagles have been clocked at up to 80 m.p.h. without flapping at all. They just soar on invisible columns of air.

God is working on your prayer....and God is working on you

William Cowper- The Waiting Soul

Confirm my feeble knee;
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of thee.
Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet since I feel it so;
It yields some hope of life divine
Within, however low.
I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar;
And every door is shut but one,
And that is mercy's door.

Luke 12:35-38 “Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. ³⁶You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. ³⁷Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, blessed are those servants.

48b From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning; a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit.

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Wait for the Lord.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation **eagerly waits** with anticipation for God’s sons to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of him who subjected it—in the hope ²¹that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God’s children. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. ²³Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, **eagerly waiting** for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

Philippians 3:20-21 Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.

Jonathan Edwards prayed, “O Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs.” Waiting helps to do that. (2 Cor 4:18)

Fishing Analogy- waiting is pleasant because of the hope

Waiting drives us to nearness with God

Waiting exposes our weaknesses and reveals His strength

Waiting is faith in action (Hebrews 11:1)

Waiting stamps eternity on our eyeballs (2 Cor 4:18)

Waiting allows the onlooking world the opportunity to see God's glory through our groanings (Romans 8:18-25)