



January 3, 2021
John 1:1-9

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Waiting for Something

Grace to you and peace from God our father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

So begins the story of Jesus in this Gospel of John. The other Gospels begin differently -- telling us of angels and shepherds and a visit to Bethlehem and a donkey and a star -- that's our favorite. But John's Gospel starts with these beautiful and mysterious words: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* Leave it to John to carry us into the story of salvation with words of poetry and mystery and just a bit of confusion. Sometimes I am humbled by the words of John -- images of darkness and light; celebration of miracles -- water into wine; a woman at a well -- finding herself and meeting her Savior; feeding of the 5000; Jesus walking on water; the healing of the man born blind; the raising of Lazarus -- John shares all of these stories with us. Moments of hope for us to hold onto in the living of these days -- but I still find it amusing that John does not offer us a star or a baby in a manger to help us find our way into the story of our Savior.

Perhaps this is exactly what God intended us for as we walk into 2021. We are all just a little bit off-kilter and maybe that is what the introduction to the book of John offers to all of us. A reminder that we do not have everything figured out as we enter into this new year. For some of us, the new year brings nothing new. There will be no change from our current loneliness or inability to enter into normal routines. For others, we are ready to let go of what 2020 brought us and yet we are held captive to a vaccine disbursement that seems to be too slow from the start. Of course, we have held our breath in anticipation for a vaccine, wait I mean a Savior. Well, maybe for both.

I spent an evening last week cooking with my 11-year-old daughter. She is full of life -- beautiful and electric. We decided to make tomato soup together. Relatively simple. Chop onions, press garlic, puree tomatoes, add a little flour, a little sugar, a little honey, salt and pepper, and boil and simmer. Anna was ready to jump in. I started her on chopping. Reminded her to tuck her fingertips into the onion -- well after two chops and me beginning to sweat watching her knife skills -- I took over. She added olive oil and garlic to the pot and then I added the onion. She began to stir and about 30 seconds in -- asked is we could add the other ingredients. Nope -- you need to stir the onions for eight minutes. "Eight minutes!" she exclaimed. (An eternity for an 11-year-old.) And after three minutes she asked me to take over. So, I started to stir and she moved to the cans of stewed tomatoes that needed to be opened -- and to my shock and awe -- I realized she, apparently, had never used a can opener -- because she kept turning the can opener but nothing was happening...until I helped her press down hard enough to cut into the can. And then she was off like a shot. One can, two cans, three cans. And then we pureed the tomatoes and she poured them into the pot. "How long do I have to stir now, Dad?" "Until it boils." "Well, how long will that take?" "Not a clue. Put your phone down. Keep stirring." "Dad..." "What?" "Can I be done?" "You have been stirring for 30 seconds." "Ok." "Put your phone down." "Dad." "What?" "Can I be done?" "OK. Do you want to switch places?" "OK -- what are you doing?" "Washing dishes." "Um...can I be done done?" "Yes. Go."

Waiting is hard. Especially if you are 11. And waiting has been hard on all of us. Stay-at-home orders, mask mandates, travel bans, and a ton of days in quarantine. Fourteen or is it ten or is it seven with a negative test or is it ten days from a family member being symptomatic and then another 14 before your kid can go back to

school? Whatever it is – however long it has been – it feels like the waiting has been going on far longer than it actually has. Though someone early on in the pandemic said the month of March lasted like 246 days instead of its normal 31 – my daughter could not agree more. And so, it is important to remind us of some other moments of waiting to put things into perspective.

I am always stunned to be reminded that from the last word of God in the book of Malachi to the first word of God in the New Testament – some 400 years passed...talk about waiting. The prophet Isaiah, who prophesied that a Savior would be born, died about 700 years before Jesus was born. That's a long time. A reminder that for those who were waiting for God's promised Messiah – a Savior for the world – waiting became a way of life. And I have to imagine that after waiting for so long – God's promise of a Savior must have begun to look like "fake news."

One Christmas a little boy said to another, "We got an artificial Christmas tree this year." The other boy asked, "Did that bother you?" The first boy responded, "Not as long as the presents are real." And that my friends, is the promise of God given in the birth of baby.

John writes, *"All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."*

And that, is God's promise to all of us, even as we keep waiting and expecting and longing for the miracle of a vaccine to deliver us from these long days of restlessness and shadowed despair. The light shines. A Savior is born to us. The King of kings comes to us. Leaving throne and throne room for a manger and the worship of animals in the night air. The Savior of the world, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings comes to us.

Years ago, a newspaper columnist named John Kass wrote a column in the Chicago Tribune about a man whose last name was Bouch, a waiter in a local tavern. Bouch was Moroccan, and knew that the king of Morocco, King Mohammed, had been very responsive to his subjects -- so Bouch decided to write to him -- and the king wrote back. It made Bouch so happy! He said, "Look at the letters! These are letters from the King! If I meet him, I'll be so happy!" Kass, the columnist commented, "How many guys hauling beer and burgers in a Chicago tavern have a correspondence going with a royal monarch?"

I agree that a personal letter from a king is wonderful -- but we have something even more wonderful -- a personal visit -- and an invitation to becoming children of the King -- part of the family -- heirs to the kingdom. How can it get better than that!

Christmas Day has come and gone. Some of the presents that we have given or received have already been broken or misplaced -- but don't misplace this one. You are a child of God. That is the present that keeps on giving all year long. Stand a little straighter! Walk a little prouder! Love a little better! Someday you will walk into the throne room -- into the presence of God. You will see God face to face -- have God greet you as beloved child. Until then, spend every day preparing for that moment -- preparing yourself to stand in the presence of Almighty God. Amen.