

Advent - The Practice of Staying Alert

The Bible Project -> we believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Advent is about clinging to the love and promises of God.
It is about living in the time in-between.

We as the church “need practices that teach us to walk with God in the crucible of our own fragility.” ~ Tish Harrison Warren

Advent is one of these practices.
There is something unique and sacred about waiting.

Psalm 130:5-7 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; 6 my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. 7 O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

The Psalmist links waiting with Hope.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning.
Are we staying on the lookout for grace?

Watchmen = Trained focus

- We watch, not because we deny the reality of darkness (not optimism).
- We watch because morning has been promised.
- We watch, more than watchmen for the morning.

There can be so many distractions which want our gaze.

- Fear -> keeps us in the land of scarcity, it weakens our trust of others, it gives into the darkness and settles for loneliness, abandonment, and helplessness.
- Boredom -> a recipe for disaster
- Many lose motivation and simply settle into a life where watching ceases to exist (no one sees the point).

But Jesus-centered watching is intentional yearning with daily reminders of hope.

Remember: Hope - persists in spite of the very real facts because it is anchored in something / someone greater than our circumstances.

Most understand the concept, “It was worth the wait.”

“The tenacity of glory and goodness, even in this shadowed world of tears, trains my eyes to pay attention, to stay alert not only to the darkness of our story, but to the light as well.” ~ Tish Harrison Warren

For a child of God, Jesus is worth it!
Eschatological hope - John 16:33 Jesus has overcome the world.

I can continue watching and waiting because the one I long for is trustworthy.
To live is Christ (Philippians 2:21-22).

We were given the most spectacular companion.
We were given the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit lives in the redeemed.

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

There is no time for boredom in our waiting.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

And so we stay alert!

Mark 13:33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action,[a] and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 5:8-11 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Another practice in our waiting is prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Prayer is a gift given to us in our waiting.

- Prayer lifts our heads to heavenly things. It quiets the noise (limits the distractions) of earthly things.
- Our watching becomes refreshing.
- We learn to appreciate the stillness, silence, and gentle presence.
- Prayer moves us to the precision of night vision.
- Prayer tests the ropes attached to the life rafts.

Joseph and Mary

Matthew 1:19-25 & 2:13-15

Luke 1:26-38

When Simeon blessed Jesus, Joseph and Mary marveled together (Luke 2:28-33)

John the Baptist -> prophet of the Most High

Luke 1:79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Mission: to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Disciple of Jesus -> **John 4:42** They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Mission: **1 Peter 3:15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

1 Thessalonians 5:2-9 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. **3** While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **4** But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. **5** For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. **6** So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. **8** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and

love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **9** For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Trusting God with what's beyond our sight.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.