



# Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

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## In the Waiting

By The Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker

“Mommy, when are we going to be there? How long will it take? How many days will we stay? Will there be bunk beds?”

The constant questions from our girls have become an expected part of preparing for any family trip. Whenever we’re heading out of town, their excitement bubbles over, and all the questions come pouring out. They can hardly contain their anticipation.

As we get older, I think we often lose that sense of joyful expectation, the childlike excitement over what’s ahead. Life has a way of wearing it down, because so much of our time is spent waiting, and not always for things that feel good. We wait for an interview, wait in traffic or in line at the DMV, wait for a doctor to call, wait on test results, wait for news about someone we love. We wait... and wait.

Waiting can feel like a waste of time – like we’re passive or idle, just watching the minutes tick by. But it is often in the waiting that God is

most active within us. Even when it seems like God is silent or still, He is working in us and in the world, even if we can't yet see it.

The struggle of waiting is nothing new. Throughout the Old Testament we hear the stories of God's people waiting on Him to save them. The Israelites waited in Egypt for rescue. They waited in the desert for forty years before entering the Promised Land. They waited in exile in Babylon for the chance to return home to Jerusalem. They waited for the Messiah, longing for justice, righteousness, and peace.

Jeremiah prophesied,  
"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (23:5).

Waiting on God can feel futile because we want things on *our* timeline and under *our* control. But God's timing is rarely our timing. And this is one of the central lessons of the Church's season of Advent.

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipating the Lord's return. Even as we prepare to celebrate the joy of His first coming at Christmas, we keep our hearts open for His coming again. I can't count how many times over the years I've prayed John's simple prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). When I see the state of the world – the brokenness, the violence, the hatred, the divisions – that prayer rises again in my heart.

We all know what it feels like when things aren't the way they're supposed to be. We know what it is to be unsettled, to long for something more, to ache for things to be made right. Advent is about that yearning, but not for the next best human program or political leader. We're not waiting for another temporary, fragile solution. Advent is about our deep longing for God's Kingdom to come, and for God's justice, righteousness, and peace to prevail.

That unsettled feeling in our hearts is a longing for the One who can do what we cannot. And thanks be to God that He has already come to save us in Christ Jesus. By His cross and Resurrection, Jesus has redeemed the world. Though sin, evil, and death no longer have

eternal power over us, on this side of the Resurrection we still wait for the day when we will never experience them again. We wait for our Savior's return with anticipation and hope.

Just like our girls asking question after question before a family trip, we may find ourselves asking questions of God: "How long, Lord? When will You return? Are You still there?" But in this season of waiting – and in every season of waiting in our lives -- we can trust that God is at work, and His Kingdom continues to break in. We can trust that our Lord *will* return and make all things right.

I invite you to take a moment today to pray or sing (or both!) the words of Anglican pastor and musician Charles Wesley:

"Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee."

<https://youtu.be/5lwtbnU-1Tw?si=1hJGB-Zq88TtPtU3>