



Christmas Devotions: Faith, Hope, Love

Part 1 - Faith

by Kimberly Smith

For better or worse, one of the skills I exercised and developed during our recent months of lockdown was that of online shopping. (I'm not the only one, right?) The best websites to buy from were those who offered package tracking because the frequent messages of update also served as a break to the social isolation as my phone 'pinged' with the latest update! "Your order has been packaged." "Your order has left the depot." "Your parcel is now with Aus Post." And eventually the message "Get ready! Your parcel is coming today!" Oh, the excitement! Of course, there are other experiences where the parcel moved a whole lot slower and the communication was far less frequent. Where you wondered if you'd just donated to some overseas company (and were never going to see the products you'd ordered).

Waiting can be hard. Social observers note our increasing dissatisfaction for waiting. As technology advances and products and services can be exchanged almost instantaneously, we get less tolerant of those things that take longer to happen.

Every Christmas season, I am struck again by the waiting required of ancient believers anticipating the 'delivery' of the king to rescue them and restore them to relationship with God. God promised a saviour would come "Your order has been created." and at various times throughout history He broadcast through prophets the update. "Your parcel is on its way." And ultimately, eventually, a star over a manger and a host of angels declare, "Your package has been delivered!" We read the scriptures and see that all happen within a few chapters of text, but we know that it actually happened over *hundreds* of years! Generations lived and died, passing on the promise of a coming Saviour. Communities repeated the words of the prophets and the conviction of their ancestors to emerging generations. "A King is coming! Our rescuer is on His way!" For hundreds of years!

This week in our devotional series we are focusing on FAITH.

Hebrews 11:1-2 says, *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.*

We commend the *ancients* for remaining faith-filled in the hundreds of years of anticipation, of watching many kings rise and fall, of the 'silent' intertestamental period, of false alarms and misdirected hope - of being certain enough of what they had not yet seen to keep encouraging the next generation with the news it was on its way.

And then Mary! Faith-filled in what she could not see but also, undoubtedly, in the face of others' scepticism and outright disbelief. Only she could know for certain that the conception was miraculous, and we know that even as Jesus walked the earth people still struggled to believe this was the promise they'd been waiting for. John 2:22 reminds us that it was only after Jesus had resurrected that the disciples believed and understood.

As we reflect again on this incredible season that celebrates a promise delivered, might we allow the story to testify to us again of the faithfulness of God. Might we allow this profound evidence of His promise-keeping to speak into the places in our hearts and lives where we are waiting. Those dreams unrealized or broken, the weight of grief or loss, the impact of uncertainty and unclarity, the cycles of addiction or despair, the doubt and disbelief - and all the other experiences and circumstances that are desperately in need of breakthrough and deliverance - for ourselves or for our world. Might the Christmas story inspire and grow our faith to *remain certain of what we do not see.*

FOR REFLECTION:-

- When and how has God demonstrated His love and power to you after a season of waiting? How do these stories serve to grow your own and others' faith?
- What practices and areas of focus have you found helpful when you are experiencing a season of waiting?
- In what areas of your life are you currently 'waiting' or feeling God is distant? What promises do you need to be reminded of to continue to persist in faith?

Blessings,

Kimberly

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