

Christmas Eve 2021 – Rest Assured

Christmas Eve is about a lot of things. Travel, family, last-minute shopping, traditions; you name it. But when you get right down to it, it's all about waiting, isn't it? Waiting and anticipating. Waiting and remembering – that Jesus was born. Waiting and hoping that he'll come again. Christmas Eve is all about waiting.

And if you think about it, so is life. At least a good portion of it. We're *constantly* waiting for something. Big things, little things, temporal things, and lasting things. Except waiting out there isn't *nearly* as glamorous as waiting in here. On Christmas Eve we know how the story *ends*. In life, we don't.

We go through difficulty, and we're not sure how things are going to turn out. We get sick, and we're not even sure God knows. We lose a loved one, and we're not sure he cares. We wait, and lose hope. We suffer, and nearly despair. So much so that's it's *wearying* at times. We get weary. Like a weary traveler on a long journey

If that's *you* this Christmas, if that's *you* this year, I want to share three thoughts with you that I think are some of the most comforting in all the Bible. So that you don't just *wait* in life, but anticipate. You don't despair, but hope.

Here's the first:

1. No matter what you're going through God knows and cares. (Exodus 2:23-25)

Rest assured. That's what he conveyed to the ancient Israelites; in *their* weariness. They were living in Egypt, having settled there years earlier due to a *famine* in the land of Canaan; and it says in **Ex 2:23** . . .

[23] During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. [24] And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. [25] God saw the people of Israel—and God knew. (ESV)

He heard, he remembered, he saw, and he *knew*.

I love that. So often we think God doesn't even *know* about our trials and tribulations, let alone *care*. We feel lonely, depressed, and isolated. When nothing could be further from the truth.

➤ Several years ago, I shared this very Scripture at the graveside of a teenager who committed suicide. I wasn't officiating the funeral, but at the last moment as we gathered at the grave, the young man's dad said, "You say something." And the first thing that popped into my head was this verse.

God saw the trouble of his people, God heard the groaning of their heart, and God knew. He knew. He cared. And *I* knew, gathered around that grave, that if it was true in Egypt, it was true in Iowa. If it was true then, it's true now. Because God's the same. Yesterday, today, and forever.

No matter what you're going through, God knows. Rest assured. He knows your heart, your thoughts, your situations, your feelings, your struggles; everything. *He sits above the circle of the earth* the Bible says (Is 40:22a), and knows. Nothing is *hidden* from his sight, and nothing is too insignificant for him. *Even the hairs of your head* (Mt 10:30).

God knows, and God cares. Which is why he tells us to cast all our anxieties on him. All our weariness. (1 Pet 5:7)

➤ Do you remember times when you were a little kid, and fell off your bike? And all you wanted was your mom? That's it. Just her.

I think I was 8 years old when my friends and I made a ramp one day, that took off from an embankment, and then sloped away. So you stayed airborne a little longer. We'd start by the garage, gain speed down the driveway, veer off at just the right spot, and hit the ramp. It was awesome.

Until I decided I was Evil Knievel one time, and pulled up and back on the handlebars extra hard. Not good. I flipped in the air, landed on my back, and got the wind knocked out of me.

Do you think I ran to my friends? As soon as I could breath, I ran screaming and bawling all the way to the front door of our house. Because I knew my mom cared more than anyone in the world. And when I got there, there she was; arms open wide. Like she knew I was coming.

In Mt 6:25, Jesus said – *Do not be anxious about your life*; and 8 verses later said – *Your heavenly Father knows* (Mt 6:25, 32). He knows and he cares. No matter what you're going through. Rest assured. That's the first thought.

The second, is that . . .

2. Waiting is often the requirement for God's greatest blessing. (Isaiah 64:4)

No matter *how* long it takes. No matter *how* it seems. He's always at work, and most of the time it's out of sight; below the water line. Like the slow expansion of a coral reef from the bottom of the ocean up. Until one day it surfaces and becomes visible.

God's greatest blessing often comes after our longest wait. Like the blessing of being released from slavery in ancient Israel; after waiting 430 *years* (Ex 12:40). And then 40 more in the *desert*, to enter the Promised Land. And later on they waited 70 years to be released from captivity in Babylon. And the remnant, another 400 years in silence; during the intertestamental period. No prophets spoke and no words were recorded.

Until Jesus came, and began fulfilling the prophecies that most had given up on. They waited, and God blessed. Beyond their wildest dreams. Because waiting is often what God *requires* to pour out his greatest blessing.

➤ **Is 64:4** says – *From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him*. We have a God who *acts*, on behalf of those who *wait*. Wait for *him*. *They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength* (Is 40:31). Which is why King David said – *I waited patiently for the LORD* (Ps 40:1). And tells us to be strong and courageous. (**Ps 27:14**)

Wait for the LORD [he said]; *be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!* Whether you're waiting for a spouse, a baby, a home, a job, a decision, surgery, or healing; God blesses those who *wait* for him. That's the testimony of the Bible.

Over and over again we find God's people *waiting* on him; and over and over we find God *blessing* them. Like he did Abraham and Sarah with a baby. And Daniel in the lion's den. And Mary, with the Son of God. And Simeon, with the privilege of holding him. Every single one of them waited, and every single one of them was blessed.

➤ Including those who suffered and *died* while waiting. Like it says in **Heb 11:39**. *All these* [all these who suffered and died], *though commended through their faith* [their courageous and patient waiting on God], *did not receive what was promised* [did not], *since God had provided something better for us* [those of us who believe; namely, salvation through faith in Jesus] *that apart from us they should not be made perfect* [they should not be justified; declared righteous in God's sight].

God's people of old waited for centuries. And *died* in their waiting. Does that prove the principle false? That waiting is often the requirement for God's greatest blessing? No. Because he wasn't finished, and death is not the end. At least for believers. He had something *better* in store.

And still does. As we wait *for our blessed hope*. As we wait *for the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13). You may not receive God's greatest blessing *this* side of eternity, but receive it you will. Especially his blessing of eternal life.

Are you waiting for that? Are you waiting for *Jesus* this Christmas Eve? I hope so. Because if you are, there's a blessing in store that will make his first coming *pale* in comparison. Rest assured.

3. Because of Jesus, hope is always justified. (Rom 15:13)

No matter what you're going through, no matter how long you wait, hope is *always* justified. Because of Jesus. Because he came at Christmas, died on Good Friday, and rose again on Easter. Hope is justified.

And I'm not talking about a *wishful* hope; like, "I hope I get *that* for Christmas." Or an *irrational* hope; like, "I bet there's a new car in the driveway."

I'm talking about *biblical* hope. The quiet confidence and blessed assurance that God *is* good and *does* good. That in Christ, in a relationship with him, you have all that you'll ever need, for all eternity.

➤ Weary or not, because of Jesus, hope is always justified. (**Rom 15:13**) That's why the Apostle Paul could say: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing* [believing in *Jesus*, trusting *him* with your life, living for *him*], *so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*. May the God of hope *fill* you, so you may *abound* in hope. All because you *believe* in Jesus.

Take a look at this **video**, and let the words minister to your heart.

(Weary Traveler – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z36k-BXIags>)

Summary

Because of Jesus, hope is *always* justified. No matter *what* you're going through. No matter *how* long you've waited. God knows, God cares, and God blesses. Rest assured.

Candle Lighting

As we light our candles and relive the birth of Jesus, after all the waiting and anticipation, I trust your joy will be full, and this night holy. Set apart in your heart, and in your home.

700 years before Christ (**Is 60:1**), the prophet Isaiah said – *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you*.

What Isaiah prophesied, we know: the Light of the World. So that we wouldn't have to remain in *darkness*, but have the light of *life*.

Let's stand and worship. (*O Holy Night, Silent Night*)