

Well, good morning and happy Twixtmas. Does anyone know that term besides me? I heard it for the very first time this week. Twixtmas. It comes from that term, sort of betwixt and between.

So the Twixtmas season is that. That. So those awkward days between Christmas and New Year's where you really lose all track. Bode sent me a meme yesterday that sort of describes perfectly.

Yeah, I'll give you a chance to process that. It's a funny. It's Jeff Bridges going, is this a. What day is this? Do we all feel that way in the middle of this weird time?

For me, it's this season where you're sort of tidying up from Christmas, putting stuff away, running across maybe some gifts that you forgot to actually rap because you hid them so well that you yourself sort of forgot where they were. Anyone else have done that before in the past? I think. I think I. I think I got all the presents that I bought actually under the tree.

I think I did. But I had to get really creative because one of these boys cannot stand not knowing what he's getting for Christmas. He has to know there are no places in my house that are safe from his snooping and prying. One place seems to be safe, the closet where I keep all the cleaning supplies. The boys never open that door.

So that's a good. That's a good, safe place. But you have to get clever about where you hide things. And sometimes I'm just too clever for my own good because I forget where I put them all because one of them has a hard time. Difficult time being patient.

Can you relate to that impatience? I suspect most of us can. Patience is hard for most of us when we know that something is coming. We sort of want it right now, immediately. God seems to think that learning godly patience is.

And that is simply practicing the presence of God in the uncertainty of the present. God seems to think that this kind of discipline is necessary spiritually for us. After all, if it weren't necessary, we'd already be in heaven. So in between the space where God speaks his promise to us, then delivers on his promise to us, he asks us to wait. But not just wait, but wait well.

So today's final woman in our Christmas Faithful and Fearless series has some lessons on how to wait. Well, I'm gonna pray. And if you want to turn to Luke chapter two, we're gonna. There's three verses that we're gonna hang out in this morning. Luke, chapter two.

It's the first Matthew, Mark, Luke Third book of the New Testament. It's the one with the red letters in it. So if you get close to some red letters, you're really close to Luke and you're going to Luke

chapter two and we'll hang out there. Heavenly Father, learning how to live in sort of this in between time. From the time that you came to earth in the first incarnation and the time that you will return again as conquering King.

We have to, we have to live in this twixt time. And we can get impatient with the imperfections of the world dealing with things not as they yet will be. But we want to live there purposefully. We want to live there with meaning. We want to live there in this space, in this span of time with you.

So today we pray that you would speak to us from your word so that we can learn to wait on you in a way that keeps us with you even as we wait for you. And we pray this in you in Jesus name. Amen. So this time between Christmas and New Year sort of reminds me of that, of that part of the, of the Nativity account where the shepherds leave Mary and Joseph and the baby there and, and, and Mary and Joseph now are sort of left alone to sort of manage a new baby in the home. They've got to get back to sort of the ordinary things of life.

The day to day of caring and raising and learning how to care and learning how to raise a baby. Nothing much happens except the scripture says Mary ponders all these things in her heart. But she, but she can't just sit there and ponder all these things. She's got to, she's got to do stuff as she ponders all these things. Anyone know what Mary's experiencing right there?

Because life doesn't stop so you can ponder, you have to keep going. And in this instance, there's things that, that Mary and Joseph have to do. There are some, there's some, actually some religious things they need to do. There are specific rites and ceremonies that they have to observe that help them get back into the ordinary swing of things. Some of this stuff is, is the ceremonies like purification rights for Mary.

So she's had a baby and because of that she needs to go through a purification process before she can go back to worship at the temple there. There is also the presentation of Jesus at the temple, similar to what we do with baby dedications here. Mary and Joseph had to do the same thing with Jesus to take him to temple to present him before the priests there. And there's a blessing and A dedication for the baby. There's also sort of an act of worship that they will do alongside that.

The worship includes sacrificing some small animals, maybe two small birds, is what they would sacrifice to present a worship sacrifice to the Lord. And it's during these rites and ceremonies at the temple in Jerusalem that they encounter a man and a woman. Now, the man's name is Simeon. And In Luke, chapter 2, verse 25, we hear his account. There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon who was righteous and

devout.

He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. That's just a way of saying he was waiting for the Messiah. And the Messiah is God's promise, redeemer of Israel, the one that he prophesied would come to Eve, who would come and rescue and ransom the captivity of humanity and release us into freedom. And so this is the consolation of Israel, and this is what Simeon is waiting for. The Holy Spirit was on him.

It says. Now, many sermons have been preached on Simeon, and there's a lot of good stuff to unpack with Simeon, but he's not the person we're focusing on today. If you want to study Simeon, do it on your own time. Today we're going to look at the next person that they meet. And this person's name is Anna.

And she was also there waiting on the consolation for the consolation of Israel. And here is her story. There's only three, three verses. Luke, chapter two, verses 36 and 38. There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel of the tribe of Asher.

And she was very old. She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was a widow until she was 84. So she's 84, which doesn't sound that old now that I'm looking at 60 in a few years. 84. But I remember as a young person, 84 was like, why are you still on earth now?

I'm like, oh, there's still a reason. Don't be pushing me out the door just yet, kids. She's 84. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying, coming up to them at that very moment. She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel.

If you write in your Bible, underline all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Because we'll come back to that little phrase right there. Now, again, it's only three verses, but Luke gives to Anna enough that we can unpack some really, really good stuff. The first of it is biographical. So we know she's old.

We've talked about that. I said some offensive stuff. I apologize if you're over the age of 70. We're all going to get there eventually, so I apologize for that. But here's what you need to know.

She was a prophetess. So the Bible says she was a prophet. Prophets are people with spiritual wisdom. Her role, or the role of a prophet, is to proclaim God's word to the people. Now here's her family background.

This is interesting. She is the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. Now, Asher was one of Jacob's 12 sons. If you know your Old

Testament history, you know that Jacob had 12 sons. And when they went to the promised land, the land was distributed to each of the twelve sons.

Each of those sons got a portion of the land. Joseph is a special. A special example. You can study him separately. But God gave to Asher some really great territory.

God gave to Asher land northwest. You see it right up there at the very tip top. So Asher's up at the very top, across from Naphtali. It's right on the. On the Mediterranean coastline.

Beautiful area. There's access to sea routes. There's easy international trade with foreign nations. There's lots of rain, rich, fertile soil up there. They had it all up in Asher.

And the tribe of Asher was due to become great on the world stage, but it never happened. Maybe it was because of their location. They were sort of on the edge, removed from the bulk of the nation. They probably had maybe a little more social connection, cultural connection to other countries. So the tribe of Asher sort of isolated from their own people.

They didn't engage much with their other brother tribes. They're not mentioned a lot in the wars that Israel fought against their neighbors. Although there's evidence that they expressed loyalty to the Israeli kings. It seems that they were also willing to dabble and live comfortably in the cultures of the pagan nations to their north. And maybe, and I'm conjecturing here, let's be honest, maybe it's because of their distance from the center of activity.

Maybe it's because of some disobedience. God told them not to intermarry, not to mix with other nations. Maybe it's because of God's discipline. Because of that, Asher was conquered, people got displaced, and they sort of just melted into the other regions and religions nearby. No one really knows, however, what happened to Asher.

But when you talk about the lost tribes of Israel, if you've ever heard that term, Asher is one of Those lost tribes sort of just got lost. But Anna is not lost because Anna has found her place right there in the temple. Anna, it says in verse 37, never left the temple, but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. She put herself right in the center of the action. Now she has no children.

If she had, she would have been living with them. And of course she's old and so her own parents are long gone. Even her tribe is awol. No one knows where they are. So in some sense Anna is all alone.

When we feel alone, it's easy and tempting to lean into all the sad

and lonely and sort of self pitying emotions. Why did God allow this? Why doesn't God do something? For me it's always, is there a meaning in what I'm going through right now? Is there some purpose in my situation?

If so, why can't God tell me? I need to know now. And the longer God takes to answer, if he does, the easier it is to sort of lean into impatient loneliness, impatient hopelessness. When you're hopeless, the world can look very big and very scary and very dark. It wasn't too many years back when the world was rocking with uncertainty and everyone was isolating.

It was a scary and for many a very hopeless time. As a culture, our mental health took a big hit. It still is taking a big hit. So what do we do when we have questions and we feel isolated and alone and the world feels dark and hopeless? What do we do when we're waiting for God to give us some sort of answer, some sort of sign or some sort of meaning to whatever we're going through, whatever we're facing, whatever we're working through.

How do we do that in a way that honors God? Well, Anna reminds us of this important thing in the uncertainty of the present because the present can oftentimes be very uncertain. We need to live in God's presence in the present, live in the presence now. How do we do that? Well, first of all, through worship and prayer.

Luke tells us that says she spent her days and nights there in the temple worshiping and praying. Worship and prayer are the fuel that keeps hope alive in the darkness of the world. Worship was Anna's daily discipline where she met with her Creator and sustain her. The one who never left her alone, never left her feeling forsaken. Her source of strength and joy was there in the presence of God, spending time with him.

This is important because we don't just show up to worship when times are good, when we sort of feel like it. Oh Everyone got out the door at the good at the right time. Today's gonna be a good day of worship. No, worship is an everyday thing. It's not just a Sunday thing.

It's not just a Christmas Eve thing. We had a great Christmas Eve service, by the way, thanks to all those who put time and effort into making that happen. That was a great experience. But. But worship isn't just about those high experiences.

Worship is about those times that are. That are uncertain, those times that are sad, even those times where we feel lonely, those times where we feel anxious. Philippians tells us in chapter four, verse six that we shouldn't let those moments control us. It says, don't be anxious about anything. But in every situation, no matter the situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request before

God.

Worship and pray. I don't know what Anna prayed about. She didn't have any kids to worry over and stress over. She didn't have a husband to complain about in her prayers. So I don't know what she prayed about.

But I know that anxiety is no respecter of persons. So I suspect Anna had plenty of her own stuff to present to God in prayer. Prayer anchors our hope when everything around us feels chaotic and it anchors our hope in the Lord. Prayer was the avenue where she expressed her fears and concerns, where she gained strength and perspective. And I also think that she prayed not just for herself, but I think she prayed for others as well.

She's there in the temple all the time. And there in the temple, thousands of people pass through every day. If you are an avid people watcher, how many of you guys are. You like to watch people. You get good at this and you can see with amazing clarity the state of an individual's mind, the nature of some people's relationship with each other.

You're watching people in the airport and they're walking together. If you know what you're looking for, you can tell how good they are going to be on this trip, if they're going to survive it. So I see Anna there in the temple and she sees this young couple come in and there's a little baby in their arms. And. And I think Anna does like a lot of our folks do here.

She sees that and she walks up and she engages them in conversation. And then she ends with a question, can I pray for you? I just picture her doing that. It's important that we not pass up opportunities to pray with someone else, because when we pray with and for others, it builds our own faith. Have you all experienced that?

Because we all have anxious stuff. Praying together is important. Philippians 4:7 says, the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. When you present your concerns and anxieties to God. But notice in verse seven.

Do we still have that up there?

It will guard your hearts minds. Do you notice anything about hearts and minds, any grammar students here? Those are plural words. It won't guard your heart and it won't guard your mind. It will guard your hearts and will guard your minds.

I believe there's something very powerful in that. I'm convinced that the peace of God which transcends understanding, descends from heaven especially quickly when we are praying with others. So as first

Thessalonians says, we rejoice always, we pray continually, we give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. Amen. Finally, when you're impatiently waiting on God to answer or deliver or explain in the uncertainty of the present, don't wait alone.

Like the tribe of Asher. Sometimes we feel like we got this. We have enough resources on our own. We don't need to bother anyone else with our stuff. I don't need others.

I've got sandy beaches and fertile soil and beautiful ocean views. I've got my business connections, or I've got my family, or I've got my bank account, or, you know, we all got our stuff. We don't need others. We don't need the church. But then a storm hits, a hurricane rolls in and we realize, ah, all that I thought I had can get wiped out in a moment.

And why do I need. Well, I need people. We understand in those moments that we need each other. So Anna knew this. So look what happens after she meets with Jesus family.

Look, verse 38. She comes up to them at that moment she gives thanks to God. She speaks about the child. Then who? To all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel.

There were others there. It wasn't just Anna and Simeon. They weren't alone waiting for the Messiah. There were more people there who were waiting impatiently for the same thing.

When we're surrounded by people who have the same questions we do, it's important to remember we are not alone. I need a drink of water. I've got one of those delightful peanuts or nuts in my back of my throat. Can you mute me real quick?

Yeah. Or not.

It's important to remember that we are surrounded by people who have the same stuff. Let's see who gets here first. Go, go. Run, Run. Old guy, young woman.

Let's see who's faster. Oh, look, the tort. Oh, this is what we pay her for, right there. I'll just hold it. Unless someone wants to come up and be my holder.

We're surrounded by people who have the same questions we do, the same. Same anxiety as we do. We are not alone. And wading through difficult things and dark days is just easier when we do it with others. That's why we go sit in the emergency with someone.

That's why we go visit in the hospitals. That's why we make food for

people when they experience a loss. That's why we get here early and kind of hang out with people and talk and visit. It's why we linger in the foyer after the service, because we just. We just know that being with others encourages us while we wait.

We know instinctively that waiting for whatever is easier when we wait with others. I got the best compliment. Sean was talking to me about this, and he said, yeah, I tell people when I'm standing in line. We've all been in lines before. I don't like to stand in line any more than anyone else does.

But Sean said, I always think about, if I have to stand in line, who would I want to stand in line with? And, Tim, you're someone I would want to stand in line with, because I feel like we'd have a good time in line. And I'm like, really? I feel like I'm horrible in lines. I'm very impatient in lines.

But maybe think about that. Who would you want to stand in line with and be that kind of person? Today you may be sitting out there with lots of questions, things that you may be pondering, things that you may be impatiently questioning God about. Why God, when God, where God, how God? God answers all those questions in his own good time.

Ecclesiastes says, for everything there is a season, including the answers from God. For everything there's a time and a purpose. And in the meantime, in the twixt time, Psalm 27 tells us to wait for the Lord to be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Worship.

Pray. Stay connected with others who are also learning to trust God. Because lamentation tells us that the Lord is good to those who wait for him. There's a delight and a joy that we discover when we wait on the Lord. We discover the goodness of God.

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. We're going to prepare for a time of communion now. And as we do, I just want to Remind us that waiting is hard, but God's timing is perfect. When the time is right, God acts. The Old Testament book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk writes this. For the vision is yet for the appointed time. It testifies about the end, and it will not lie. You can count on. You can count on this.

And though it delays, though it takes longer than you wish it would, wait for it, since it will certainly come and it won't be late. Galatians tells us that when the fullness of time had come, when the appointed time had arrived, God sent forth his Son. Today you may be getting very impatient with God's timing, but can I encourage you, as we hold the bread and the cup this morning, to worship, to settle your

heart, settle your mind, close your eyes, allow your breathing just to relax, and just be with God in this moment. Turn your attention to him, and then pray. Pray about whatever you're impatient about, but also pray this.

Thank you, Lord, because of your great love for the world at the perfect time, at the appointed time, at the right time, you gave us the gift of your only son. And because you know the times better than I do, I can trust you to provide everything else I need in your perfect time. And then look around, because this is communion. This means that we do it together. We commune not just with God in this moment, but we become one thing, the bride of Christ in this moment of communion.

And communion is something that we do together. Encouraging each other is something that can only be done when we are together. So in this moment, as you hold the bread and the cup, I'm gonna ask you to commit to this community or the community that you normally worship in. Commit to that community that God has given to you. Commit to encouraging, commitment and blessing and being encouraged by and being blessed by those who live and worship and serve around you.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of Jesus in the fullness of time. You came and you gave us your life so that we might have life. We try to sort it out. We try to make up all the answers on our own. We try to figure it out on our own.

We try to manage it on our own. And yet you tell us, come to me, you who are tired of that, who are weary from that, lay down the yoke that you picked up that I didn't ask you to, and take up mine. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Trust me.

Follow me.

Be mine. Lord, if there's anyone here this morning that has not surrendered their life to you, who have not said yes to your invitation. I pray that today, by your spirit you would encourage them, move them closer to you, build their trust in you so they can say yes to you and your plan.

We pray all this in Jesus name. Amen.

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