

2019 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

WHAT CAN'T WAIT



ART, REFLECTIONS, &
PROMPTS FOR THE
SEASON OF WAITING



Sanctified Art
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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22ND

COURAGE (LOVE) CAN'T WAIT

*Carve out time today for prayer and quiet contemplation.
Read this poem as part of your devotional time.*

When people talk about love
They talk about heartbreak.
They talk about the love that
got away,
And the love that left them longing.

When people talk about love
Rarely do they say, “be brave.”
I wish they would.

To love is to pull the oxygen from
your lungs and to say,
“Here, take a breath.”

To love is to come out from hiding,
To allow the light to shine on you.
To love is to wear your heart outside
of your body—

Fingers crossed that the holder
handles it with care.

To love is to trust that sometimes
hurt and pain come with the
territory,

But you’re going to love anyway.
So love anyway.

Love like there’s no tomorrow.
Love as if love is not a scarcity.
Love like Mary, who cradled a baby
amidst the threat of being stoned.
And love like Joseph, who took a
child in that he knew was not
his own.

Of course I say all of this because
I need to hear it too.
There are dusty corners of my heart
that I still protect—
Love stored up like grain
While the world is in famine.

So the next time you see me,
Remind me to be brave.

The next time you see me,
Invite me to stand in the light
with you.

The next time you see me,
Handle with care and maybe,
Just maybe,
We’ll find a holy and wild
Love that won’t wait.

When people talk about love
They talk about heartbreak.
Rarely do they say, “be brave.”
I wish they would.

Prayer by Sarah Are



Trust | Hannah Garrity



MONDAY, DECEMBER 23RD

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

FROM THE ARTIST | HANNAH GARRITY

I imagine Joseph scoffing at Mary's explanation. "Trust me." "How can I?" I hear a tense conversation filled with tears and devastation. I sense fear of societal judgement. What will people say?

Joseph is skeptical. He knows he cannot be the father of the baby. He decides to break his engagement with Mary.

He must feel so betrayed by her. So, how is it that he can believe the angel in the dream?

Suddenly, he welcomes the opportunity to parent Jesus anyway. He follows through on his commitment to Mary anyway.

Trust in Mary, trust in God; Joseph could only have managed his role in this story with trust. His faith relies heavily on trust. Deep down, we know who we can trust. Subconsciously, we all know right from wrong.

In this image, Joseph has just placed the wedding ring on Mary's hand. They have just said their vows, committing their lives to each other. Here, Joseph seals his trust in Mary's word, his trust in the word of God, with action.

Whom do I need to let God lead me to trust? Where in my life is my justified skepticism keeping me from God's call? How am I letting my concern for the opinions of society impede my willingness to act on God's word?

PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

Courage Can't Wait

ACTION PROMPT

Write a love letter to a stranger. Begin with a salutation such as, “Dear beloved one,” and fill the letter with affirmations and encouragement. Close the letter with, “No matter what, you are loved.” Fold and tuck the letter in a public place—a park bench, a car windshield, a mailbox—for a stranger to receive.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

Love Can't Wait

JOURNALING & REFLECTION

On this Christmas day, make a list of all the areas in your life where love is known and felt. You might mention people, places, pets, or experiences. Close in prayer, giving thanks for all the love in your life.



God Couldn't Wait | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26TH

READ LUKE 2:1-14, (15-20)

FROM THE ARTIST | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

What If God Had Waited?

What if God had waited
For Mary to be wed,
For Herod to relent,
For a legitimate birthing bed?

What if God had waited
Until the powerful promoted
peace,
And the politicians agreed?

What if God had waited
For a plan with no risk of failure,
For a place that felt safe
and secure?

What if God had waited
For the anxious to find rest,
For the cynic to know hope,
For the brokenhearted to
be whole?
For the wars to cease,
For the violence to end,
For the fears to pass,
For the weapons to be banned?

What if God had waited
For the earth to heal,
For the laws to change,
For every life to matter
the same,
For the addict to be freed
from shame,
For the refugees to not
be blamed?

What if God had waited
Until all was calm,
All was bright,
For a future that might
Never come?

What if God had waited?
But God couldn't wait.

God couldn't wait to be love
known in flesh and bone—
And neither should we.

PRAYER

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



Fuel for Justice | Lauren Wright Pittman



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27TH

READ ISAIAH 9:2-7

FROM THE ARTIST | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...” These musical attributes wash over us each Christmas season. Why aren’t we more familiar with the imagery at the beginning of this passage? It is imagery from a prophet speaking to a people defeated, oppressed, and living in the shadow of Assyria’s military might—a “land of deep darkness” (Is. 9:2). It is a bold, particular, contextual hope punctuated by broken yokes, splintered rods, and burning materials of war.

The boots and garments of warriors are burned as fuel. These violent elements are set ablaze and physically transformed into warmth, light, and fuel for justice. I think this text calls for action and a shift in our identity. We are no longer to be defined by violence. We are called to be people who make peace—those who tear down systems of oppression. We are to transform the things of war into light. What exists in your world that needs to be set on fire? What darkness, violence, or negative energy can you transfer into fuel for peace?

In this drawing, light radiates from the broken ends of the rod which previously weighed down this woman’s shoulders. The fleeting darkness of violence encircles this first mandorla of light, but the flames which consume the weapons of war cannot be contained by the darkness. In traditional Christian art, the mandorla, or a pointed oval, usually frames the entire body of Christ. In this instance, the mandorla frames the inbreaking of light—the point at which oppressive substance is destroyed. This is an image of Christ breaking into the world—Christ lives and breathes through our participation in dismantling injustice. This image stands parallel to the familiar image of a child born with authority resting on his shoulders—the Prince of Peace. We need to hold these images together in tension and in harmony to find the gravity of this prophecy and our role in it.

PRAYER

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist’s statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.

SABBATH CAN'T WAIT

What *can* wait? On this day of Sabbath, identify one thing in your life that feels urgent but can actually wait in order for you to rest. Commit to one of the activities below, or spend time doing something else that centers and recharges you.

- Go for a walk outside.
- Sit quietly and meditate.
- Plant something indoors or outside.
- Try cooking or baking with a new recipe.
- Spend time with a friend or loved one.
- Dance or play music.
- Explore a new area of your town or city.
- Take a nap.
- Draw or create something.
- Write a poem or a song.
- Play a board game with friends or family.
- Read a book.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29TH

WHAT CAN'T WAIT?

*Carve out time today for prayer and quiet contemplation.
Read this poem as part of your devotional time.*

I confess—
I am good at waiting.
I waited for someone else to be passionate before I made a change.
I waited for you to say, “I love you” before I was honest.
I waited for affirmation about my work before trying harder.
I waited for anyone else to take the lead instead of speaking up.
I waited for you to forget instead of saying sorry.
I wait for a compliment before I feel beautiful.
I wait for your call before calling back.
I wait for an opinion before stating my own.
I wait for a rainy day to slow down.
I wait for a sunny day to get outside.
I wait for Saturdays to call home.
I wait for free time to read my Bible.
And too often, I wait for Sunday to pray.
I have lived well, but I have also sat on my hands,
Turned my head, closed my eyes,
Lived in denial, pretended it would get better,
Believed in someone else’s call over my own,
And ignored the fact that these hands belong to God.
But these hands belong to God.

I guess what I’m trying to say is,
What if Mary waited nine months so that we wouldn’t have to?
And what if the disciples waited three days so that we wouldn’t have to?
There is love to sow,
Peace to reap,
Joy to feel,
And a promised day that I am longing for.
So if you want to join me,
I’ll be busy, unlearning years of sitting and waiting.

Prayer by Sarah Are