

## Waiting in the Darkness John 1:1-5

### Introduction:

"Unhappy fans voiced their displeasure when Scott Hoch refused to hit his 9-foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole of the 2003 Ford Championship at Doral in Miami, Florida. As darkness fell, Hoch was unsure about the lay of the green. So the tournament's sudden-death finish was delayed until the next morning..." No one was excited about the wait the darkness and Hoch forced upon them.

Darkness. It is an apt image for feeling powerless, confused or unprepared to take action. When we're in the dark, we don't know. We don't understand what's going on? When we're in the dark, we also feel powerless. We don't feel able to do it. We're not ready to do whatever is needed to be done.

In short, darkness makes us wait. It is the wait in that darkness that is so hard.

I remember the wait when we were told, after Tara had already labored for many hours, that she would require an emergency C-section to deliver Anna Catherine. In only a few minutes, my heart went from anticipating one of life's great joys to contemplating my worst fears. Powerless and confused, yet all I could do was wait. Others of us wait for....

- Test results and news from the doctor. Do I have it? What will we do?
- Test results to see if we make the grade to get in the school or program. Did I pass?
- Our children. Will they assume the responsibilities of adulthood? Will they make the right decisions?
- Our spouse. How will he or she respond when they discover the worst about us? Will they stay? Will they continue to love? Will they grow and learn how to change?

Other than sleeping in the dark, I suppose the thing we do most in the dark is "waiting." I hate it. I think most people agree with me; don't you? There doesn't seem to be anything good about waiting.

And of course, now it's Christmas. I suppose our children are focused on waiting—waiting for presents. However, the rest of us are just busy; we don't have *time* to wait. We've got to get people, places and things ready for Christmas.

Thankfully, today marks the beginning of the season of Advent, which celebrates the arrival of Jesus in his birth and looks forward to his return at the end of the ages. Historically, Christians have used Advent to anchor us amidst the mixed and sometimes dangerous messages our culture speaks to us regarding Christmas. As we all know, right at the top of the list of those dangerous messages is busyness.

**Main Idea:** Nevertheless, instead of getting busy, Advent calls us to wait. It reminds us that waiting in the darkness isn't all bad. When we wait we come to terms with our confusion and powerlessness. Our waiting then distills into longing and hoping for life to be made right. **When such longing characterizes our waiting, we are ready to ponder a "light and life" that might arrive from outside our world. Of course, this is the message of Christmas, which is told us especially in the first five verses of John's Gospel.**

Christians are those who are learning to wait on their Lord and Savior, the *logos*, who is Jesus Christ. According to John 1:1-5, He is the Divine word, the *light* shining in the darkness—a darkness still present in this broken world, yet a darkness powerless before Christ, our King.

**Key Question:** Let's learn how John's Gospel teaches us to wait.

Unlike the other Gospels, which seek to explain the historical links of Jesus' birth, John wants us to see history itself explain in terms of Jesus. The prologue of John's Gospel not only explains Christmas, it seeks to explain everything.

### 1) A new creation has begun

The first words of John's Gospel, "in the beginning," cannot help but remind us of the first words of Genesis, chapter one. The focus of Genesis one is the creation of the cosmos, which finds its pinnacle moment in the formation of humanity bearing the image of God. Very intentionally, John wants us to see that the story of Jesus Christ is also a creation story. More precisely, it is a *re-creation* story. Through Jesus Christ, God is re-creating the cosmos. Through Jesus Christ, a new beginning has come.

### 2) A new word has been spoken

The second "buzzword" we discover is the word, "word." *In the beginning was the Word...* In the Greek, it reads, *logos*. To John's early readers, this word would have immediately aroused curiosity. What did he mean?

- a) **Greek philosophers** would have understood *logos* to be a technical term, referring to the ground of being or the principle of rationality.
- b) **Hebrew scholars** probably heard at least one of three possible referents for the term.
  - Creation. Is this the "word" that God used to speak creation into existence?
  - Wisdom literature. Is this the Divine wisdom referred to in the book of Proverbs?
  - The Law or *Torah*. Many Hebrew scholars would have understood God's word as simply the revelation of God's law revealed by Moses.

Most likely John is well aware of the potential ambiguity and breadth of meaning made possible through his use of the word *logos*. He wants to draw in as many readers as possible. Nevertheless, no matter one's background no one could have anticipated that the Word of God would be revealed as both personal and divine. Yet, that is what John claims in verse one for the *logos*.

- c) **The Word was God.** The *logos* is divine, co-equal with God.
- d) **The Word was *with* God.** The *logos* is relational. This is the meaning of the middle clause in verse one.

With these two revelations of the *logos*, our categories regarding God's god-ness are blown. **Amidst our confusion, we must wait to learn more about this new word spoken from God.**

### 3) A new light has dawned

Finally, verses 4 and 5 reveal that through this *logos* a new light has dawned. However, through the image of light, John deepens our understanding of his earlier reference to the creation story of Genesis one. Verse three reminds us that Jesus Christ was not only present at creation, he was the primary agent of creation. "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Therefore, **Jesus was the one speaking the creative word to the darkness of a formless world.** This is how we are to understand verse 4, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." In other words, through Jesus Christ life and light sustained all that he had made.

However, with the entrance of sin through the transgression of Adam and Eve darkness fell over the entire world. Unlike the darkness of the original creation, a darkness which was characterized by a yet unformed creation, this darkness was moral. It is the darkness a world mal-formed through sin. Now, all of the world experiences guilt and misery. We are, quite literally, in the dark. We are confused and we are powerless on account of sin.

Through Jesus Christ a new light has dawned against which the darkness cannot stand. Importantly, the word John uses to refer to the weakness of the darkness has some ambiguity too. It can mean one of two things:

- a) **The darkness cannot understand/comprehend the light of the Divine *Logos* (NAS, NIV, KJV), or**
- b) **The darkness cannot overwhelm or overcome the light of the Divine *Logos* (ESV, RSV)**

I think John is well aware of these possible interpretations and probably wants us to embrace both concepts. Jesus is the light that gives us answers amidst our confusion. His is the light that explains the lostness we feel amidst life's brokenness. And, Jesus is the light that empowers us amidst our weakness. Jesus is the power before which all other powers flee—sin, guilt, death and the devil. When this light shines, darkness in all of its forms flees.

#### **4) Bringing it all together:**

What is the message for us as we being this Advent season? Isn't it the case that through our busyness and activity we are trying to create the perfect moment, speak the perfect word and illumine the perfect setting. Our culture trains us to provide the spark of creation, the word of life and the light of hope. But, we can't. It is the message of Christmas that reminds us we must wait on the Lord for these things. Only in Jesus is found the hope of our longing—a new creation, word and light amidst the darkness.

So, as hard as waiting is, maybe taking time to wait might be an important way for us to remember what Christmas is all about. It's not about what we've done, doing or are going to do. Rather, it's about Jesus. Are you getting ready to wait?

#### **Conclusion:**

Now, back to our earlier story:

"[Scott] Hoch, 47, sank his putt the next morning and then birdied a third playoff hole to win \$900,000. Had Hoch tried to finish the tournament on Sunday, he probably would have lost. In the dwindling light, Hoch, who has had five eye operations, thought the putt would move left. His caddie saw it the other direction. The morning light proved the caddie right."

Based on information from an Associated Press article by Doug Ferguson (3-11-03); submitted by  
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The truth of the Gospel is simple, yet profound: good light makes all the difference in the world. However, sometimes we don't see the light unless we step back and wait for it to come. As Christmas descends upon us this year, let's not forget to stop and wait. Because when we stop and wait, we can also remember that our longings cannot be fulfilled by us and the things we buy or do. Rather, the stuff of a new creation, new word and new light can only come through Jesus. Let's wait for him and it will make all the difference!