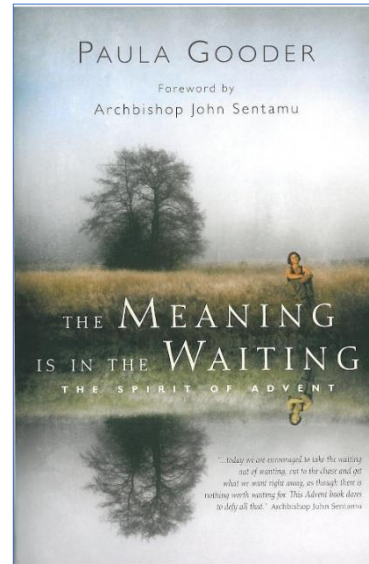


Advent 2023

THE MEANING IS IN THE WAITING

1

Abraham and Sarah, our Ancestors in the Faith – Called to Wait



- 'This present is for you, but don't open it now' How do you feel about waiting?
- Why do we find it so hard to wait? And why do you think our society anticipates Christmas by celebrating it early?
- Read the poem by RS Thomas. What is positive about waiting?

Read Genesis 12: 1-9

- How do you think Abram and Sarai thought about God's command to 'go'?
- 'God's call to us remains a call to change: to leaving and accompanying, to moving and changing, to growing and flourishing' (p 21). Share examples from your own life.

Read Genesis 15:1-2

- In what ways does God reassure Abram of his presence and his purposes? (v2) Which of these most speaks to you?
- Thinking about the rest of the story of Abraham, how do Abraham and Sarah become not just symbols of faith but also of waiting? And how does their waiting help ours?
- What actions can you take this Advent to relearn the skill of waiting? In what ways might you relearn the skill of being present *now*, rather than living for ever in the future?

'Waiting is a counter-cultural pursuit today... Today we are encouraged to take the waiting out of waiting, cut to the chase and get what we want right away, as though there is nothing worth waiting for.' (p ix)

'In Advent we wait for something that has already happened in sure and certain knowledge that it will happen again, and again, and again.' (p 11)

Kneeling

Moments of great calm,
Kneeling before an altar
Of wood in a stone church
In summer, waiting for the God
To speak; the air a staircase
For silence; the sun's light
Ringing me, as though I acted
A great rôle. And the audiences
Still; all that close throng
Of spirits waiting, as I,
For the message.

Prompt me, God;
But not yet. When I speak,
Though it be you who speak
Through me, something is lost.
The meaning is in the waiting.

R. S. Thomas, from *The Collected Later Poems: 1988-2000*. Copyright © 2004 by R. S. Thomas.