



Episode 18: Wait With Great Hope

Hello there. It's Emily.

Before we jump into today's episode, I have a quick announcement. I want to say it's a good news/bad news type of situation but it's more like fun news and regular news.

First, the bad slash regular news. This will be the last episode of The Next Right Thing until 2018. We are almost exactly four months into this podcast and incase you haven't heard me say it already, I have loved creating this for you. With nearly 300K downloads in four months it seems this little podcast has found it's listener! So thank you for listening, for leaving reviews and most of all for recommending it to your friends and family. That is the highest praise.

Like I said, that's not really bad news, I guess. But if you've gotten used to our Tuesday rhythm, you might be a little sad (like I am) to go without your 15 minute per week reminder to simply do the next right thing in love.

Well, now for the good news.

While I won't have a new weekly episode of the podcast until 2018, I've created a mini-version of this podcast to be delivered to you everyday for the next two weeks.

You heard that right.

It's a brand new edition of *The Quiet Collection*, which is a daily audio devotional series I've designed to help you set your mind before you start your day.

This edition, is all about Christmas made for anyone who wants a little help to create space for your soul to breathe during the often busy month of December.

I wanted to design something that you could count on this month so that if every other solitary Advent intention flies out the window all you have to do is pop in your earbuds on the way to the grocery store or on a walk and listen as I read you a portion of scripture and a brief reflection to remind you of the story of Jesus.

Now if you have a favorite Advent devotional you're reading, this is not designed to replace that, not at all. Instead, it's more of a companion to whatever you're already doing for Advent.

This entire collection is 14 days in total. Each day will be delivered directly to your inbox with your Day One starting the day you sign up. So if you sign up today, then today is your day one. The last day to sign up for the Collection is December 12.

I want to help you move into December with new hope and fresh eyes and find relief from seasonal anxiety.

All you have to do to get it is check out the show notes in this episode in whatever podcast app you're listening in and I'll have a link to it there, or you can visit thenextrightthingpodcast.com to learn more.

Each day of the collection is less than 5 minutes. Oh, if you want a little preview of what to expect from The Quiet Collection for Christmas, listen in until the end of this episode and I'll give you a sneak peek.

On a personal note, creating this collection for you has truly been a gift to me. I've spent weeks and weeks crafting the content for this offering. It's been deeply moving for me, from picking out just the right music to choosing which parts of the story of Jesus to highlight, and then writing the prayers and reflections for you as well. Well, I've enjoyed it.

So thank you for listening and for buying the Collection which helps to support the work we do on the podcast.

Okay, that's all for my announcements. Now on to our final episode of 2017.

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to Episode 18.

If this is your first time listening in, this is a podcast designed to help you create space for your soul to breathe so that you can discern your next right thing in love.

There are two months out of the year where I become the most overwhelmed with decision fatigue, the first is May and the second is December. On top of the regular plans for Christmas, family gatherings, classroom parties, and other end-of-year plans, December also carries the burden of the beginning of January.

I know it feels too soon to be thinking about January. If you haven't seen them yet, the Internet will soon be swimming with top ten lists and goal-setting posts and your instagram feed will be filled with ads for new planners and goal sheets.

And that's just as you're pulling out your Christmas stuff.

We'll do that thing we do every year as a society, where we transition from buy all the things for all the people! And then within a weeks time - de-clutter, clean out, get rid of, and be a new you in the new year!

It happens every year, without fail. And while I know it's not necessarily a bad thing, all this planning and activity, it can leave a person feeling tired, overcome with choices, and just kind of wanting to fast forward to February.

So today, here at the beginning of December, let's slow for just a few minutes. Let's give ourselves permission to just be right here, in this moment, and remember why December is a sacred time of waiting, of listening, and anticipating with great hope.

On the night of March 1st, 2016, American astronaut Scott Kelly, who had spent nearly a full year on the International Space Station, arrived safely back to earth along with two other astronauts.

I followed Scott Kelly's instagram account for months by that time, amazed at his images of earth from the space station. It seemed unreal, like make-believe, like magic, almost.

Men and women working in *space*? Unbelievable.

Scott Kelly was part of NASA's Human Research Program, a one year mission designed to explore the effects that spending extended periods of time in space has on the human body.

Even more interesting, Scott Kelly's brother Mark is also an astronaut and, his identical twin. So these two men are part of a twin study conducted by NASA as well as a couple dozen other organizations, to find out what happens to two people with the same genes who spend time in a different environment for a year, one on earth and one in space.

Needless to say, I was fascinated by this whole thing.

The night of the return, I kind of felt like the only one. Because instead of covering Scott Kelly's return home after being the first American to spend 340 consecutive days in space, every camera in the United States was focused on one main event - results of the primary elections in several US states. That night, March 1, 2016 was Super Tuesday.

Because I was casually obsessed with this mission the weeks before they returned, I couldn't sleep until I knew the spacecraft had landed safely. So, I stayed up late that night, watching nasa.gov to hear what I could about the safe arrival of Soyuz TMA-18M.

It was incredibly anti-climactic just as it should be. This was serious scientific business. They are not doing this to keep us entertained.

Coverage of the landing was boring is what I'm saying. The image on the screen was mostly static, a view of the large flight control room and an occasional diagram showing where the spacecraft was at a given time.

The reporting was sporadic, delivering only the facts, most of which I didn't understand with long periods of silence in between. I waited and waited for something interesting to happen, but it all seemed rather regular, lacking the sensational feel of the political broadcasts happening everywhere else.

But I was oddly grateful for the boring coverage. Here are grown ups committed to their serious work.

There was no ticker at the bottom. There were no glamorous reporters from NASA delivering interesting tidbits of information about asteroids or space travel or the moon.

Just science and safety, no drama or glitz.

If we want to watch? Fine. But they are going about their business whether we watch or not. They have astronauts to bring home.

Once I heard they had landed safely, as my mind hovered on the edge of sleep that night, I reflected for a moment on some of the election results coverage I had seen several hours earlier. I was carrying around some cynicism and fear about the future of our country but I noticed within me, just before sleep, a spark of hope and gratitude.

Because our times are in the hands of God. And while it takes teams of brilliant men and women to send and bring astronauts to and from space, we have a Father who *made space*.

He is our good and present God, intimately acquainted with us, our ways, our brilliance, our longings, our terror, and all of our ideas.

Political coverage is relentless and loud. It's easy to forget to listen for the quietest whisper of comfort and presence from our Father who is with us in the midst of every question, every outcry, and every hope.

That night in the fog between life and dream, I felt a string-thin thought float into my mind, drawing the loosest connection between the way that spacecraft floated onto the surface of the earth and how God snuck down one dark night as a baby – *arriving while everyone was looking the other way*.

As promised, here's a sneak peek of The Quiet Collection for Christmas

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2

If you're feeling small today, small in patience, impact, attention, ability, remember that of all the ways the King could have come to establish his kingdom, the way he chose to arrive was as an unlikely hero — as the tiniest human, scrawny, helpless, and in need.

In the small way Jesus came to the earth he made an understated declaration, it was a quiet rebellion against the world's expectations before he could even open his own eyes.

How can a baby be a King? How can God be a man and God? Today, let your smallness be a gift and not a liability.

Maybe all of life is really about coming back to the manger, learning to believe that because God came as a baby, then the last ones are first, the weak ones are strong, and all of heaven hangs upside down.

The reality of Christmas and the hope of all believers points to a real day when a real baby was born in a real place from a real woman. He was a real human and a real King.

Thanks for listening to Episode 18 of The Next Right Thing.

During this season of Advent, maybe it's more important than ever to crane our necks away from distraction and choose on purpose to immerse ourselves in truth that reminds us of our good and beautiful God, books and audio and conversation that help us learn what it means to wait with great hope.

What you just heard is a snippet from Day 9 of The Quiet Collection. I would love to quietly slip the rest of that reflection I started into your inbox this December - something to help you remember the God who came down to rescue us disguised as a baby.

If you would like to receive the remainder of that reflection as well as one for every day for the next two weeks, sign up today for The Quiet Collection for Christmas, a fourteen day audio devotional series to help you set your mind before you start your day in December.

When you purchase, you'll receive the entire collection in your inbox over the next two weeks, starting with day one today.

The Collection is available until December 12 and you can join any day between now and then. The day you sign up will be your day one.

While the 12th is the last day to sign up, once you do you'll have lifetime access to listen as many times as you want. Finally, although it is an audio devotional, each day will also have a complete transcript so if you prefer reading to listening, you can of course enjoy it as well.

Just visit thenextrightthingpodcast.com to start the Collection today.

As I mentioned at the top of the episode, this is our last for 2017. It has been a joy and a privilege to offer my words to you over the past four months and I look so forward to many more episodes in 2018. Until then, you can find me at emilypfreeman.com and on Instagram @emilypfreeman.

As always, visit thenextrightthingpodcast.com for show notes and a complete transcript of this and every other episode.

I'll leave you with a few words on waiting from Madeliene L'Engle in her poem, first coming:

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!