

Yes, as I write this, we are just hours away from bringing in the year of our Lord, 2023. I imagine if you're in my age bracket, you are completely mind-blown by how quickly the years are zipping by. It feels like there is only a three-month span between Christmases, and I really feel the time passing when I see old friends again, whose children that were still in a stroller are now graduating from college. So very fast.

Ironically, when it comes to looking forward to the return of Jesus, the clock seems to stop. Just imagine, the disciples and apostles thought that when they watched Jesus ascend into Heaven, they had no idea when he was going to return. Perhaps they assumed he would be gone, just for a week or so, then he would return as he had promised. I'm sure many anticipated that 'today may be the day.' I would guess they never comprehended that we would still be watching and waiting, over two-thousand years later.

We are still saying these words of hope as we continue to live these earthly lives. Many times, I pray that 'today may be the day.' But until then, we must continue to do the work of he who has sent us. Gracious, it isn't easy, is it? Especially when we are praying for our loved ones, our family. How do we relay to others that this 'Jesus' thing we're living out is not about religion. It is not the ceremonies or the pamphlets or schedules. It has nothing to do with how many butts are filling our pews or chairs in the sanctuary. It's all about Jesus.

I've been told that we Christians choose to believe in Jesus as a God-Man, to satisfy our need for a deity to understand our humanness. Now that I've written it down here, that's not such a bad thing, is it? But I see that more as a perk, rather than a crutch or a necessity.

I was also told that if God created everything, including man, then he must have created sin as well, so that's why the world is in such a mess. I don't even like writing that line down because it goes against everything I believe. Yes, believe. That is what faith is. Asking yourself, "What do I believe?" God gave us a freewill to choose. Unfortunately, we often choose sin over the will of God. That's on us, not on God.

I don't have all the answers to these questions. They are great questions, but I'm not a theologian. **All I can do is share my experiences, how God changed my life, and now my job is to tell others how he has been faithful and true each and every moment of my life since I chose to follow him.**

My friends, I get it. Life sucks sometimes! I don't like using that word either, but it is very applicable. Things happen that just aren't fair. I don't know why there is hunger in the world, but I do know God's word tells us to feed the hungry. I don't know why one brother would kill another, but apparently God knew the evil we were capable of, because he wrote down his laws on two tablets of stone.

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I believe in the God who predestined a virgin birth, offspring from the lineage of David from the tribe of Judah, and his name would be called Jesus. I believe that Jesus was raised as a Hebrew child, who did not sin, while knowing he was sent for one purpose, to the Jew and the Gentile alike. He was sent to us in the form of a human so he could experience all that we do, taking on the fullness of our pain and heartbreak. He spent his short human life telling others that he did not come to spread religion, but to introduce us to His Father, to whom we too may call "Daddy", or "Abba, Father."

To follow Jesus, to believe in Jesus, to love Jesus, means having a personal relationship with Jesus. The 'church' is not the building. The church is you, and me. If you only knew how much you are loved by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are one. And you were created to love God because he loved you first. To follow Christ is not about what you do. It's all about who he is!

What more can I say? The midnight hour is approaching. For the new year, yes. But also, we must continue to ask, "Will today be the day?" I believe the answer to this question will be 'yes' very soon. May God bless you, and may you find Jesus along your path in the new year to come.

Blessings,

Lisa Jo

