



## Waiting for the Gift

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The time of waiting is almost over, the gathering and gift giving will soon begin. In just a few hours living rooms in many places all across the world will look like a whirlwind of color as colored bags, paper, tissue paper, ribbons, bows and all other manner of wrapping materials get tossed aside into a pile while we dig deep for the gift.

The story has been shared once again about the birth of a child who would become the man named Jesus. A child born to humble and struggling parents, who can't relate to that? A child threatened by a ruler who would chase all who are different out of the country. As if we could build a moat around us rather than finding ways to build bridges of peace and compassion. A family shut out of a place of hospitality at the inn and offered only a sheltering place in a cave, a social issue that exists even today as we know of at least 6 people who are somewhat familiar to this congregation have not a warm place to rest their head tonight. But we will have heard the story, we will relate to a family that is struggling, we will relate to a country that is suffering under the political pressure of a frightened and miserable ruling class, we will relate to the knowledge that our own safety and

wellbeing and homes may feel less than secure but somehow, we will find hope in the timeless message of the gifts that are brought to us this time of year.

Gifts not just intangible but real gifts that our loved ones picked with hopes that it would bring us moments of delight and joy. Gifts that our children or grandchildren specially made wanting to bring pleasure and good feelings to us.

We are waiting for gifts and along with the waiting comes a hoping that what we have given will delight others too. And that reminds me of this long weeks waiting for a certain package. Let me tell you the story. In November during that great catalogue deluge- you know that one, don't you??? One catalogue stuck out as a possibility – it was from a company called BACK IN THE SADDLE. Great I thought, my other family in Winchendon – Not my son Eric, Andrea and Kevin, but Felicia who was once married to my eldest son Scott and who is the sister of my son's wife, (got that?) and Frank her partner and Emma the 11-year-old daughter love horses and all things related. Emma is a barrel rider - this is a special kind of horseback riding involving stunts with barrels. So I got on line with Back in the Saddle and tried to order some gifts. The on-line process was not up and running was the message I got on that Sunday after Thanksgiving. try again later the pop up said. Two days later I did and was successful, all gifts picked, all entered on the order form on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>. Because it was Dec 7th I paid extra for the postage to assure an expedited delivery of 2 days. On that second day while expecting delivery; I was waiting and instead I got a note by email. It read "Sorry for any inconvenience we are in process of updating our distribution center- don't worry it won't take long". I was still waiting for the gift and checked the status of the order around December 19. "In the warehouse was the message" But I am waiting, I thought. Next day I called the customer service number and this is where waiting for the gift becomes more interesting. Remember I really want these gifts they are the perfect ones for them. I have finally found the perfect gifts and all I have to do is get them and I am waiting. Can you relate?

I reach customer service, tell them my issue and say I did pay extra to get them here quicker and I did wait for a little bit as was asked because of the distribution center change over, but I told her in my most polite but pleading voice- I am waiting they are the perfect gift.

She checked my order said, they are in the warehouse. "yes" I said I know that please can you send them out to get here by Christmas and I reminded her I already paid for the special shipping rate. "Well let me check", she says. When she comes back she says "well if you had called me to place the order we could have done this quicker". "But you are an on-line catalogue service", I said. "yes, yes" was her answer, "well what we will do is cancel out your order and redo it and that will send it out". Does this make any sense to you? Not to me either and I am still waiting. But we do that and she tells me "one of the items is not available there were only 7 of them". "yes" I say "but I have one in the warehouse so that makes one available, right?" "Not necessarily" she says. "Well go ahead and re submit the order I tell her I don't care if I can't get that item it is okay I can think of something else *somewhere else, I did add*. So, she re-writes my order tells me that they will honor my price for shipping and get it to me. but without that one item. "No big deal" I say "just get it to me because I am waiting for the gifts they are perfect for what I want to give". Then she tallies it all, it is the same price as before because now they have the 1 item that she didn't think was available. And that was Monday and I am waiting. I check the status of the order it is being shipped. Supposedly rush order as first agreed to and it is Friday night at 4:30 Christmas is two days away and I am waiting. Christmas Eve morning 9:00 am the gifts arrive, I am thrilled.

But the metaphor and symbolism of waiting is not lost as I take a few moments to reflect on what it means to be waiting for the gift. All of our life is one sort of waiting or another. We wait for morn to turn to night and night to day again, we wait for year to turn to another year, we wait for our dreams to come true, we wait for our lives to be filled with joy and with love. When we wait for

gifts we can use the time to reflect on how we will receive them and how we will pass them on to others.

I hope that this day and the next few days brings a riot of color, an avalanche of all goodness, and moments of expectant waiting. Blessed be, happy holidays and merry Christmas.