

W2 | D3

SO SHALL IT BE

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When the ultrasound tech said, “Sit tight. The doctor will be in shortly,” she had enough “uh-oh” in her voice to tell us something wasn’t right. Our normal ob-gyn was away (of course), so a stranger sat before us holding pictures of my daughter’s brain. After pointing out six “cloudy spots” on the scan, he explained two scenarios. In the first, these cysts would result in the death of our daughter sometime before her first birthday. In the second, she would be fine. “She’s fine or she isn’t,” he said. The only test available endangered her life, so the doctor asked us how to proceed. I stared at this man’s degrees on the wall, wondering how this could be our decision to make. We chose life and the ambiguity of anxious waiting.

Normal life continued. Fall transitioned into Advent. I watched my full-term wife show my infant son how to arrange our Dickens’ Village houses just right. We decorated the tree. We wrapped a baby doll for him to open on Christmas morning, hoping it would teach him to be gentle with his sister who may or may not come home. The waiting—that awful mix of hope and horror—carried us into the new year. The regular rhythms of ministry ticked by like the heart monitors of congregants I visited at the hospital. I rehearsed the statistics provided by the doctors. *She’s fine. It’s fine.* We waited.

Advent turned to Christmas and then Epiphany. We feasted with our church family. We prepared for Lent. We

faced the whiplash of seemingly contradictory emotions embedded in the church calendar.

The night before Ash Wednesday, a once-in-a-decade blizzard descended on Louisville. We gathered the next day, with snow burying the world around us, to remember we were dying. I wondered if my daughter was still living.

On February 18, 2015, at roughly 6:40 a.m., my phone began vibrating during my homily. I read the message: “She’s coming.” We barreled through the snow to the hospital. Tears exploded when the doctor, playing a perfect Rafiki, lifted my daughter into the air.

“Is she okay?” I choked out. She was beautiful. She was healthy. She was perfect. In the twinkling of an eye, terror transformed into joy.

Our waiting taught us something of how to wait and of what is awaiting us when the waiting is over. Ours is no longer an ambiguous waiting. It may at times be painful and persistent, but it is neither vain nor uncertain. We know that when we see Jesus, we will be made like him. No one whose hope is in the Lord is ever put to shame, so we face our waiting, complicated and unpleasant as it may be. We hold our contradictory emotions. We rest in the goodness of him who keeps all his promises. He promised a child would be born unto us, and so he was. That child promised that new life would be born in each of us, and so shall it be. ✨

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