



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 184 Waiting for Easter With Jessica Herberger Elisa Morgan & Eryn Adkins with Jessica Herberger

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Jessica: In holding that quiet, like literally for those, you know, in that 24-hour span, that's the same discomfort we have when we find ourselves saying, Where is God? What is happening right now? My kid's sick. My husband left. My parents are dying. My friends have abandoned me. Whatever the thing is. We don't like that. So we want to...give me a solution and get me out of here. And it's that same discomfort. I think that we really...we struggle even more and more so now, you know, in our current culture.

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Eryn: Well Elisa, I know that this guest that we have on today is a deep soul, and I'm excited to learn from her. You can tell she's a deep soul just by the titles of her books. So I'll share the titles: *Peace in the Dark*, *Life Surrendered* and *Break Bread Together*. And she is somebody that really wants to pursue and continues to pursue just deeply-formed spiritual life, growth in community, loving others, allowing people to just feel deeply about their walk with God. And I feel like she gives a lot of permission slips. Not that she's the authority to do it, right? But she is somebody that is like locks arms with people, gives them permission to deeply feel.

Elisa: Hey, we'll take a permission slip from anyone who offers it. I mean, like my hands...

Eryn: Yeah, I know. That's what I mean.

Elisa: ...are wide open for that, yeah.

Eryn: Yes. Well, Jessica, welcome to the *God Hears Her* podcast. We're so excited to have you.

Jessica: Thank you so much. I am thrilled to be with both of you today.

Eryn: Share with us, where are you coming from right now?

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Jessica: I am in upstate New York, just outside of Albany, so sort of halfway between New York City and Canada. The home I am sitting in right now is my childhood home.

Elisa: No!

Jessica: So I am right where I started.

Eryn: No!

Jessica: Yes.

Elisa: Nobody does that.

Eryn: Oh my!

Jessica: That's right.

Eryn: I know.

Elisa: Okay, tell us how that happened. Tell us your story.

Jessica: Yeah, so...

Eryn: Let's go.

Jessica: I grew up here. My parents bought this house when I was 13. We had lived around the corner, essentially, prior to that. And when my mom got sick, as...when I was a young adult, I came back. So there was a brief period of time where I was in college and starting my young adult life where I was about an hour away. And then came back to help take care of my mom and my dad and my brother who was in high school at the time, and we have not left. So it's been about 17 years since that move back home.

Elisa: And I'm imagining you were single when you came back, but maybe not.

Jessica: I was actually...we were newly-married.

Elisa: Okay.



Jessica: So we just got thrown in it from the beginning.

Elisa: Yeah, sounds like it, yeah.

Jessica: So we...it was about a year into our marriage when my mom was diagnosed with a brain tumor very suddenly. And my dad already had a brain injury of his own.

Elisa: Oh wow.

Jessica: And I came home to help run things, manage things. And, um, as I said, my brother was in high school at the time.

Eryn: How old were you at that time?

Jessica: I was 29 when that all started. And we've since raised three kids here. And my brother has been launched off into the world. Both of my parents have passed at this point. And we have this as our home full of so many memories. So we got to really experience intergenerational living for a long time. And now we're in this new season. Still feels new to us after five years of just being a little family unit of five. But yeah, right here, the room that I'm in now was my mom's closet when I was growing up and then was my daughter's nursery and is now my writing office.

Elisa: Is there a way you can give words to how this experience has shaped you as you maybe compare it to some of your friends or what you see in the media or your other family members?

Jessica: Living in this house in particular just is the goodness and kindness of God. My kids never got to meet my mom, and they get to use the same rolling pin she used. There's something really beautiful about doing that in the kitchen that was hers. There's been a real sweetness and provision in that when I could have a very disconnected reality, being an adult orphan's sort of a really odd existence. And I've had that existence for quite a while now. But I feel like I am not lost or forgotten and nor are my parents, even to my kids, as I said, like, you know, people who would really genuinely love to know them. There's a knowing that comes from just inhabiting the same spaces that they inhabited. So it's so sweet.

Eryn: Jessica, you know, you said something that I've witnessed a friend walk through in the last couple of years and you said an adult orphan. Would you unpack that from somebody that doesn't know what that looks like cause they don't maybe have any scope or understanding of one, what that is how it feels...



Jessica: Sure.

Eryn: ...how you process and move forward with that new idea and part of your identity?

Jessica: Yeah, it is a situation that gets pretty minimized within our culture, because we don't understand it. My mom has passed for...it's been 16 and a half years; and I still need her. And I still don't have access to her, and so that's sort of the reality of living without parents. My husband and I have been the matriarch and patriarch of our family since we were thirty, which is wild to think about. So it's...there's a few different things happening at once. Having teenagers at this point, like I would love to know what I was like as a teenager. I have questions about myself that are left unanswered, and they will be until I see my parents in heaven. Because you're just too young to know to start sort of holding up all the information you want to have about yourself, about your family. And so there's a real sense of loss beyond just not having the person there. But there's a lot of gaps in my own knowledge about myself, about...

Eryn: Yeah.

Jessica: ...my mom, uh, my dad, things like that. And so that's a really unusual piece of it. I've learned to have a lot of grace and openness towards friends who are saying things and complaining about moms, you know, that never goes away, even as we mature. We all drive each other a little crazy. And I've learned to recognize that that's the way that their life has played out. And mine just simply something else was before me. And so to learn how to live that has been really helpful. And also recognizing that, in a really unusual way, I am a resource for my friends who are now figuring out how to handle aging parents and things like that, you know, medical decisions, diagnoses. I sort of walked through all that quite a while ago. And it's been a really sweet thing to be able to be a resource and probably a more compassionate ear to people.

Elisa: That is so beautiful. I'm hearing several things. One is I identify. I became an adult orphan in my early thirties. So I understand that too. And so now I'm in my late sixties, and it's a long time to live as the matriarch, if you will.

Jessica: That's right.

Elisa: My kids sure wouldn't look at me that way. But anyway, I also love the space that you've taken us into already, this surprising space of silence, of being alone, of loss, of being cut off. Because that is the topic of another book that you've written on Holy Saturday.



Jessica: Yes.

Elisa: Let's dive into this topic, this timely, seasonal topic that hits us around Easter time...especially of Holy Saturday. What is that, and how'd you start thinking about it?

Jessica: Yeah, Holy Saturday. So let's get a definition sort of on the table. It's not even a topic I think that most people within the Christian realm even really understand like the vernacular of it. Holy Saturday is that time chronologically between the end of Good Friday and the beginning of Easter Sunday. And so it's a real time that has occurred, and that's where we begin. But then *Peace in the Dark* sort of puts forth this notion that Holy Saturday is also this more liminal space that we are all living so often, but we feel lost. And I think we feel lost because we don't have an understanding of that original Holy Saturday. We know because we have the distinct honor of living on this side of Easter that we know how it all ended. So we know that Jesus rose again. But there was a time where that was not known. And that's a really important part of Easter week that we miss. We are people who love to celebrate, and we do not like to sit in discomfort. And that is exactly what Holy Saturday demands of us. And I have been a student of Holy Week in general for many, many years. And I believe there's not one single thing that happened within those series of days that was accidental. I believe every single thing that happened was God's kindness in showing His church how to live. And that has to therefore include this 24 hours of what seemed like nothing happening.

Eryn: Right.

Jessica: But we don't talk about it. We don't have an understanding of it. And then when we find ourselves in that same period of something's gone wrong, and it's not yet fixed. What do I do in that in between time? And that's the Holy Saturdays we all find ourselves living in. Just, you know, as we've sort of unpacked some of my personal story, I've lived in Holy Saturday a lot. And getting an understanding of it has been so instrumental in not losing track of God or hope. And the really amazing thing, as I began to dig into both the Scripture and what the Scripture tells us when we look at it, is that there's actually so much happening and there're so many practices that are demonstrated for us that apply to our Holy Saturdays just today. The gospels obviously, you know, it sort of jumps from the women were at the tomb, and that's how Good Friday beautifully ends is these brave women looking death in the face. And then, depending on the gospel you're reading, there may be a line about they rested cause it was the Sabbath. And then we pick up the story again Easter morning. The reason for that, I think, is because there were so many things happening that were part of their practices on both Sabbath, on both how to deal with grief, lament, burial that were just part of what was happening within that culture at the time that we've missed completely. And so *Peace in the Dark* is an attempt to go back and say, this feels empty. But look,



there's God. He's still moving. He's still faithful. And especially for a type A person like me, the goodness is, and there's things for you to do. There are practices that have been demonstrated that will serve you, that will help you hold on to God to find peace, to grieve and lament and pray and rest. And so, Holy Saturday has become one of my favorite days and lessons for us all. I do think if we pull back and look at our lives, everyone has trials, everyone has these like jubilant moments, but that is not the bulk of life at this point. And so it's been a really wonderful thing to get to know what was really going on that day.

Eryn: So when you know that there is hope on the other side of Saturday, I know that there was the wrestling and the questions that you had on that Saturday, right in your dark Saturdays. And what you're saying, it's like, nobody talks about the pains and the heartache and the confusion and the uncertainty, the unknown. You sit, and you wait, and you hope, but then you're scared to hope because you don't know what will be on the other side.

Jessica: That's right.

Eryn: Can you kind of share and break down just the reality of that emotion and maybe if there was a moment, a memory that comes to mind for you?

Jessica: Yeah, one of the first things you have to do when you're sort of finding yourself in a Holy Saturday moment or season is to identify where you are. Like, say it out loud. Say it to yourself. That first critical step is the one I missed the most. I sort of bypassed that when my mom passed away. My son was born 30 hours after my mom's passing. And my brother went to college two and a half months after my mom's passing. And so we had a newborn, and we were college parents, and it was a wild time.

Eryn: And grieving a death.

Jessica: Yes, and I had been her primary caretaker for 16 months. It was so layered and also just so busy. The one-year anniversary of her passing was coming up and I had, to that point, experienced like one major death prior to this, but nothing, nothing compares to losing your mom, especially losing your mom when you're pregnant with your first child. It's the first grandchild. I mean, it was just so intense.

Elisa: Goodness.

Jessica: Nothing prepared me for that anniversary. And it, again, was wrapped up in my son turning one, which they are forever entwined. And that day of her anniversary, I was gutted. What I recognized was I hadn't actually given myself enough space to be honest about where I was, that this major loss had



happened, and I had to carve out time for me, just me, to grieve and acknowledge that. And I had been sort of in this Saturday, feeling very lost. And the reason I was lost is cause I didn't even figure out where I was. I think that's something that happens to a lot of us that there's sort of a sense of like how did I get here? This can't be real. Instead if we can start by saying just like those women facing the tomb, like no, this happened; and I need to look it in the eye and from there, find my footing in this is where I am. And this is who God is. And then you move forward from there.

Eryn: How did you recognize that you hadn't taken the time?

Jessica: The day of my mom's passing, or no, actually it was the next day. It was my son's birthday. And I was mad at her cause she was missing it. As I was looking back, it was like as if she had moved to Paris or something, you know. Like I just wasn't at all...I hadn't still based myself in reality instead of saying like what's actually happening is this is all terribly overwhelming. But we can still call it what it is. I didn't even have the verbiage for that. And that's when I recognized that I was pretty off course with reality and went about sorting that out. With grief in particular, we don't have language for long suffering in our culture. We don't have the compassion for that...

Eryn: That's true.

Jessica: ...for how much patience is required for these dark times. And that was the other thing I really had to learn was getting over this notion that we're some...like we get to a point where we're like sort of over things. Some things were not over till heaven. And so what does it look like to hold that and still find peace and joy and love in the midst of your life?

Elisa: You know, as you so beautifully express the surprise of Holy Saturday, you know, realizing I'm mad at my mom that she's not here.

Eryn: So honest

Elisa: The disa...yeah the disappointment of the silence, you know. These women, these disciples in Scripture, in the story of Jesus' life and death and resurrection, had a relationship with Jesus up to Good Friday.

Jessica: Right.



Elisa: He was flesh and blood, living with them, teaching them, explaining things to them, confounding them, you know, all the things. And suddenly He's gone. And as you described it, you know, the terms of, you know, we live in this world where we know what happens. We live in the already, but the not yet, you know. And they didn't. They were living in a vacuum of just silence and of just understanding death as death, as death, death, death.

Jessica: Right.

Elisa: It's almost like you're saying that Holy Saturday is the place where we sit with everything that's happened up to Good Friday.

Jessica: Correct. That's right. Imagine that we know it'll all work out okay. Like we actually do get to live in that, and I'm not suggesting anyone should forsake that. But we have no idea what that's gonna look like. We are called to still live a good and faithful life in that quiet, whatever the quiet looks like.

Eryn: Why do you think, Jessica, people tend to look over Holy Saturday?

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: Do you think it's denial? Do you think it's fear of being vulnerable?

Jessica: Yeah, I think it's mainly our dislike for discomfort. Even Good Friday, I would argue, I know we have a tendency now, like, there's Good Friday services; and we sort of sit in it for a minute. But it's pretty brief when you think about the whole day. We kind of can handle it for an hour or so. And we leave church in silence. And we're getting itchy by the time we get to our car, you know, to talk. And then we're ready. Like, we're ready to move on to Easter. Like whoo, we did it!

Elisa: Get those Easter eggs. Yep. Yep.

Jessica: Yeah, that's right. And that very discomfort in holding that quiet, like literally for those, you know, in that 24-hour span, that's the same discomfort we have when we find ourselves saying, Where is God? What is happening right now? My kid's sick. My husband left. My parents are dying. My friends have abandoned me. Whatever the thing is, we don't like that. So we want to give me a solution and get me out of here. And it's that same discomfort. I think that we really...we struggle even more and more so now, you know, in our current culture. We are bred for comfort...



Eryn: So true.

Jessica: ...and the easiest path forward. And there's just nothing in Scripture that says that's how it's supposed to go, not yet. That's not for this world. And so, there's goodness to be found, but something really transformative happens when, instead of pretending you're not in the dark, you just say, okay, I'm in the dark. God's light is within me. Like, it'll be okay. He's here, He's moving, but I am in the dark. And so we get to both live that out in our own lives. And we also get to sort of model that and be a space for other people to say that. You know, both were happening. So we get to say out loud, bravely, vulnerably, the reality of whatever dark season we might be in, but also to hold space for others to be in that dark season, to not press for, it'll be fine. Like all things work for good Like it'll be okay, you know.

Eryn: That's so true. We do, we do.

Jessica: And we love to do that.

Eryn: We'll buy a coffee mug that says that for the friend, right exactly.

Jessica: Yes. That's not what we need though. And to continue to gather...that's something that definitely happened on that first Holy Saturday that we don't think about. But chronologically, as you walk through it, Good Friday ended, and the disciples were scattered. Easter Sunday begins and they're together. How did that happen?

Elisa: Yeah, they were scattered because they were afraid. They were hiding out behind closed doors.

Jessica: That's right.

Elisa: Yeah. What do you see in that, Jessica? Where do you see the transition?

Jessica: Well, we know John was with Jesus' mother, Mary So they were likely at John's house.

Elisa: Because Jesus had asked him to take care of her from the cross.

Jessica: That's right.

Elisa: Whoa, yeah, yeah.



Jessica: That's right. And so we don't know exactly where everyone gathered but to me that seems the most likely They didn't actually make their way to the Upper Room until later on Easter. First, they, you know, they were together. We're not told where. And then the women go to the garden and then the men go to the garden to fact check the women. And then there's the road to Emmaus. And so, you know, then Jesus comes, and we...we're told He comes to the Upper Room. So that shift happened sometime on Sunday. But on Saturday, they were still together somehow. So I imagine, and this is just me imagining based on what the text says, that they were likely at John's with Mary. And I just picture them one by one knocking on the door and knowing we've all messed up and everything is broken. But at least we should be together.

Elisa: I'm picturing...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...Peter staggering in after having denied Jesus and, um, Thomas struggling because he'd been in and out. And, you know, he was really wondering what other people would see Jesus and he wouldn't, and he would want to. And, you know, just on and on all the individual stories we know about them. That's so rich. How does this gathering concept of Holy Saturday, as it may have originally been, you know, how does it inform how we celebrate Holy Saturday or how we celebrate Easter?

Jessica: Gathering is always a part of the church. It's really critical to be together with other people, even when things are wrong or quiet, when all that we have before us is to lament and pray, which is what would have happened on Saturday. And so that is a good thing to do, as Eryn said, so much of living in a Holy Saturday time can be so isolating. And for us to really press against that, it's really helpful. Like very practically on actual Holy Saturday of Easter week, you can have friends come together and just pray. There's all sorts of simple ways to just invite that into your rhythm of your Easter week celebrations. So to have a prayer service just in your home and say, we're going to come and pray the Psalms. That's which is what they would have been praying. I mean, the Psalms is a prayer book or to lament...lament. I mean I could talk about lamenting for several hours, because it's another aspect of all this that we are...we've just...

Elisa: We have no clue, yeah, yeah.

Jessica: ...lost the language of.

Elisa: And really many of the psalms are laments.



Jessica: Yeah, that's right.

Elisa: Several books of the Bible are laments.

Jessica: That's right, yeah.

Elisa: We have it as our model...

Jessica: Yes.

Elisa: ...but we don't understand it in our culture.

Jessica: No, we don't.

Elisa: Shift just a little bit. How do we help children of different ages on this Holy Saturday?

Jessica: Sure, when my kids were little, we would just have some quiet time on Saturday. So Saturday is just a quiet day in our house in general. And then so Holy Saturday, even more so. But I would have some coloring pages, we'd play some hymns, like very quietly in the background. And we'd talk about what it must have felt like to not know where Jesus was, and what was going on. And, you know, the women, at this point, at least knew where the tomb was. But not all of the, even disciples knew that information. And so, what had happened, how does it feel when it seems like God's sort of not present? Does that mean that's so? And we would talk about that for a little bit. And I have found raising our kids, they'll ask you the questions they need to know the answers to. And they'll sort of demonstrate to you what their capacity is. And so as the years go, the questions grow, and your answers can go deeper. But I think kids can handle it. They're so wise. And it makes Sunday all the more richer when we realize that there was this just dark, unknown period too. And we're called to hold both.

Eryn: That's good. As you talk about lamenting and how it is really modeled for us, and Elisa you said that as well, like the pages tell us how to lament and yet we don't ever go to it to really learn. I've been met with many people that see lamenting or sitting in discomfort as being like faithless almost and being hopeless. And you know, we discussed it earlier how it's important to sit and lament and be in that discomfort. What would you say to that? Maybe a way of thinking, how would you encourage somebody out of that way of thinking to recognize that lament is sacred?



Jessica: Yeah, I think because it is so far from our cultural means of practicing our faith, it does feel almost offensive when you hear someone lamenting. Can we say that? Like, you know, it's just, it sort of makes me feel prickly sometimes. And what I have learned is that at its core, lament is relational. It is a means of demonstrating your personal relationship with the God who hears you, who wants to hear you cry out, because you know where to go to cry out. And additionally, I would say that Jesus chose to lament at Lazarus's tomb. And He certainly could have bypassed that, but He did not and instead slowed down enough to lament. Knowing He was going to bring him back to life, He still made space for that. And if that is what Jesus did, certainly that is what we ought to do as well. And so to recognize those two things, it's modeled for us, not just Scripturally in the Psalms in Lamentations. It's actually, you know, throughout a good part of the Bible. But it's modeled by Jesus Himself and that it is a relational thing. You think about your kids, the ones who are connected to you are going to complain and let you know how they are feeling. The ones who are shut down are the ones you worry about, you know. So your relationship's strong when that is there. And God is...God wants to hear us. He wants to grieve with us. Jesus weeps with us as we weep. And so we're cutting ourselves off from a really beautiful part of the relationship between ourselves and God when we don't lament. It's almost like we're putting those blinders back on and not acknowledging where we really are and not bringing it to Him. And so again, pushing through the discomfort is really important, but it's such a beautiful thing to be able to do.

Eryn: That's good.

Elisa: I'm thinking about how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before His death. And He invited disciples to pray with Him, and they did not. And that's such a beautiful illustration of His invitation into His own lament. And we a) don't take Him seriously, b) are human and weak and frail and fall asleep, c) can't believe what's in front of us. I love this invitation you're giving us into Holy Saturday. And I really am strengthened for my everyday life to think about those disciples who saw Jesus die on Good Friday, believed He was in the tomb on Holy Saturday. And all they could do, I mean, unless they were given supernatural understanding of what was going to happen, and a couple of them had been told, but who knows what they really could do with that cognitively.

Jessica: Right, exactly.

Elisa: All they could do is go back and review who Jesus had said He was, what He had done in their lives. So, hey, you know, whether we're in a 24-hour period of Holy Saturday...

Jessica: That's right.



Elisa: ...or months and months of it, or repeat on year after year of it, the practice is to recognize where we are from hearing you, Jessica, and review what we know...

Jessica: Yes.

Elisa: ...about God to be true from our ongoing relationship with Him. And let's sit in that honestly with Him as we wait for resurrection.

Jessica: Yeah, that's right. For us to remember, we have to know. And so as we know who Jesus is, we can then remember His character. Knowing God's character is really one of the most essential things someone can do to maintain a spiritually healthy life, because it is the filter through which you must put everything. And so what do I know to be true about God? He has been faithful. And therefore He will continue to be faithful as the beauty of God being exactly who He is and who He says he is. Our friends will not be faithful, despite their best efforts, nor our spouse or our children or our parents. I mean, they may try, but there's no guarantee. There's a guarantee with Him to be faithful. And so we must know that. so we can recall it when all seems quiet and lost. Because, yes, He was in the tomb, but there was work being done. And we were moving towards that next day. But it's no accident that we didn't go immediately to that next day.

Eryn: Yeah, that's right.

Jessica: The space in between really matters for us.

[music]

Eryn: Even though Holy Saturday was a day without Jesus, it's important to remember that God is always with us. We may be in our own Holy Saturday, but God is always there. And we have hope of the resurrection in Easter Sunday. We are redeemed because He has risen.

Elisa: As we prepare for Easter, we wanted to give you a friendly nudge to read one of the Gospels, the book of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. It'll refresh your memory on the events leading up to the resurrection. And if you enjoyed this episode, please be sure to leave us a comment or a review wherever you listen to your podcast. We would love to hear from you.



Eryn: Happy Easter friends. Well, before we go, be sure to check out our show notes for links to learn more about Jessica and her book, *Peace in the Dark*. You can find that and more at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for joining us. And don't forget God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you, because you are His.

[music]

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Toria and Michaela for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

Elisa: Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor-supported, non-profit ministry dedicated to making the life-changing wisdom and stories of the Bible come alive for all people around the world.

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