

Waiting on the Lord

John 6:14-21

Focus: God uses waiting to shape our life in Him.

Function: Leave more aware of God in our waiting and more intentional about waiting on the Lord.

Waiting is a part of life – a part of life that we, in the American culture, do not do very well. Sitting at red traffic lights can be aggravating, especially if we are late. Waiting in line at a fast food restaurant for any more than three people can make us become critical real easily. Waiting in an emergency room at a hospital does not seem consistent with why you went there. Waiting for your kids to come home late at night can be nerve wracking. Waiting for **plans to be realized** whether it is individual plans or family plans or church plans can be discouraging. And waiting for God to act in our lives when there is a **need** or we are **threatened** or we are **concerned about someone else** is perhaps one of the most difficult challenges to life.

But waiting is **woven into the whole of life**, no matter how difficult it is for us. We wait for spring around this time of year. We wait nine months for the birth of a new baby. We wait for seeds to sprout and grow and finally come to harvest. We wait for rain or snow in dry seasons and we wait for it to stop in wet seasons. We wait for bed time and we wait for morning. Waiting is a part of life. The word waiting implies an **inability to make things happen yourself**. Waiting is based something else happening that you cannot force. **Today's scripture is a story of waiting -- on the Jews part, on Jesus' part and on his disciples part. Let's see what their stories of waiting might have for us.**

Context

Here is the context of our story today: Jesus has just **finished providing 5,000 people** with a meal including left-overs. Quite impressive. This was another one of John's **signs** about who Jesus was. If you remember a few weeks ago, Pastor Bruce spoke about John's use of signs in his Gospel. Jesus desired that they would not demand a sign but would listen to him and seek him for who he was – God. On the other hand, he knew that **they had needs** and in this case He met the needs of the 5,000 plus people.

Jews wait on the Messiah

At this point his popularity was growing in leaps and bounds. After this sign of providing food for everyone, **the Jews wanted like to make him king**. The Jews did not identify him as the Messiah, but they thought that He might possibly be a prophet that would prepare the way for the Messiah. They did not see Jesus as God, the heavenly Savior, but as an earthly savior. They were waiting for the Messiah, but in no way did they think Jesus was that Messiah. He might simply help them get closer to the Messiah coming as an earthly king.

That makes me ask the question, **do I wait for the Lord to act in my life like an earthly king or a heavenly King?** An earthly power would give me what I want now. He would make everything alright, in fact, wonderful. I would not have to suffer anymore; I would not have to live in a difficult circumstance; I would have all my needs met. But a heavenly King, one who rules my life may ask me to inwardly submit to the work he is doing within my being in the midst of circumstances I do not like, change my outlook on life, becoming more aware of what His purposes are in all, and who He is at work all around me. Am I waiting to be rescued or waiting to be changed into His likeness?

Jesus waits on the Lord

When the Jews wanted to make him a king, **Jesus chose to go off by himself** to the mountain. This reminds me of **another account** where Jesus was by himself confronting the very same issue. After he was baptized he went off into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. One of the temptations was to be able to rule the world – be king. He could after all do that with all his powers. Satan knew this and offered him the opportunity to have immediate gratification if Jesus would simply go for it through bowing to Him.

Perhaps as Jesus went off to the wilderness this time, he recalled that very scene not that long ago. **Jesus does rule the world**, but it was not time to make that known. The road for Jesus was **suffering and death first**. We do not know what went on between Jesus and his Father in that alone time, but we do know Jesus chose to wait on the Lord for the fulfillment of being the visible King of the earth – He still waits.

Immediate gratification is a temptation for us – “I want it now.” “Do I really have to go through that?” “I deserve more.” “I can make this happen” or “YOU should make this happen, God.” But God may have other plans for us. When we are tempted to go the wrong direction or question why things are not happening right now, we can do no less than **what Jesus did – flee to solitude** with our heavenly Father and allow Him to speak to the deepest part of who we are and affirm His purposes for us.

Thomas Green in *When the Well Runs Dry* says, “This is the reason why we lose control (or wait on the Lord) – not because God desires that we grovel before him but because the tremendous new thing which is taking place in us can only be his work.”

Paul talks about this kind of waiting in Romans 8 – “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we WAIT for it with patience.”

Disciples wait on the Lord

And lastly we have the waiting disciples. Another Gospel tells us that before Jesus went away to be alone and pray, he sent his disciples off to cross the Lake of Galilee to another town, Capernaum. They had to **leave without him**. They had to **wait for him** to come to them in his own time, not theirs.

Sometimes we are asked to **move out into a new place in life and it may feel like Jesus has sent us out into the deep without him**. Even though we have seen what the Lord has done for us in the past, such as making 5 loaves and 2 fish feed 5,000 people we are not comfortable with where he is asking us to go. We get anxious and think He is not coming.

This is what I wrote in my **journal in June, 1999** when I knew I was going to have to be treated for breast cancer: **“I cannot get into the boat with a smile on my face knowing I am headed to the other side of the lake, and must go through a fierce storm. I will get in because You call to me. I will get in because You go with me. I will get in because I must.”**

As it got dark and Jesus headed for solitude, **they obeyed Jesus**. They got in their boat and started rowing. Now we need to understand that the **Jews viewed the sea** as a place where demons and spirits dwelled. I am sure that the fisherman in the crowd had experienced threats and joys on the sea, so as the storm came up, they more than likely encouraged the rest of the group. **“We can do it! Hang in there!”** But as the storm grew, so did the anxiousness and fear.

FEAR: “One of the most pervasive emotions in the atmosphere around us is fear. We as a people are afraid – afraid of other people who may be different, afraid of inner or uncomfortable feelings, and also afraid of an unknown future. As fearful people we have a hard time waiting, because fear urges us to get away from where we are. If we find that we cannot flee, we may fight instead. We are aware of the many destructive acts that arise from our fear that something harmful will be done to us.” (Henri Nouwen, *Waiting for God*).

Then, the disciples' **worst fear was realized**. "What, what is that? It's a ghost – demon of the sea!" Sometimes our worst fears are realized in the darkness of waiting when we cannot see clearly where Jesus is. The fear that God is not working in us may take hold of our hearts, terrified. We may feel abandoned, left to our own survival techniques. We echo the Psalmist's mixed cry: **Ps. 119: 82 - 84 "My eyes fail, looking for your promise. I say, 'When will you comfort me?' Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget your decrees. How long must your servant wait?"**

But I challenge want you to think about this: **everything gestates in darkness**. A baby, a seed, a butterfly, a chick, the new day, Jesus. Darkness is not a bad thing, even if it is threatening.

Illustration: Garden of God's goodness. Ps. 27: "I would have despaired had I not believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD." Ps. 27:14.

We wait on the Lord

Here is the **wonder of this story: Jesus did not stand on shore watching them struggle**. No, He moved out – towards them. Jesus is found when they least expected him – right in the midst of the storm. **“...they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. BUT he said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’”** Can you think of any more wonderful words that you could hear in the midst of a storm? Can you think of any more powerful words that Jesus speaks to you in the midst of your waiting, your storm???? **“It is I; do not be afraid.”**

“Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.” Once they heard those words, they **WANTED to take him into the boat**. As we wait in the darkness, we can know that Jesus has not abandoned us. He is near; He sees our fear; He hears our cries. We are not alone. And so we wait. In the darkness, in the midst of the storm, hear His voice today **“It is I, do not be afraid.”** As we take Him into the boat with us, we will reach the land toward which we are going.

So **as you reflect** on this story this week, you can be assured that He is with you in your waiting. If you are denied what we want, if your plans are not coming to fruition the way we thought they would, if you are in a storm, not of our own making the time waiting is not without purpose. In this time He will form you into His likeness as He waits with you. He will come.

Will you pray with me: I call to you, O Lord, from my quiet darkness. Show me your mercy and love. Let me see your face, hear your voice, touch the hem of your cloak. I want to love you, be with you and simply stand in your presence. But I cannot make it happen. Pressing my eyes against my hands is not praying, and reading about your presence is not living in it. But there is that moment in which you will come to me, as you did to your fearful disciples, and say, “Do not be afraid; it is I.” Let that moment come soon, O Lord. And if you want to delay it then make me patient. Amen (Henri Nouwen, *A Cry for Mercy*).