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“Waiting”

Romans 8:18-25

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I took my car to the Mobil station to have the oil changed the other day and sat and waited while the work was being done. I don't think it took that long, but sitting there with nothing to do, it felt like a long time. The owner's dog was there waiting with me. But there was a big difference in how the two of us waited.

He was calm, laying lazily in a sliver of sun light stretched across the floor, getting up to greet folks who walked in and then laying back down. Me on the other hand, well I could hardly sit still. I'm not always great at waiting. And sometimes the longer I'm in that period of waiting, the harder and more confusing things get.

Dr Seuss said, “You can get so confused that you'll start in to race down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace and grind on for miles across weirdish wild space, headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.

The waiting place...for people just waiting. Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come, or a plane to go or the mail to come, or the rain to go or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow or waiting around for a Yes or No or waiting for their hair to grow.

Everyone is just waiting. Waiting for the fish to bite or waiting for wind to fly a kite or waiting around for Friday night or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake or a pot to boil, or a Better Break or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants or a wig with curls, or Another Chance. Everyone is just waiting.”

I want you to think for a moment about your last experience with waiting. So much of our lives are spent waiting, you think we'd be good at it. Yet waiting can be one of the hardest things we do.

The Bible has a lot of stories about waiting...people waiting for stuff to happen, for God to intercede:

- Noah waited for an impending flood
- The Israelites waited for freedom.
- Ruth waited for a husband
- Abraham and Sarah waited for a baby
- Joseph waited for a promotion
- Mary and Elizabeth waited together to deliver their babies
- Jesus waited for his appointed time

And they waited in some scary places

- The children of Israel waited trapped against the Red Sea while an
- army charged at them, and
- they waited in the desert for their new home
- Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego waited in a fiery furnace
- Daniel waited in a Lions Den
- Peter waited in prison (Acts 12)
- Paul waited in chains (Eph 6:20)
- We wait in difficult places too.
- Unemployment Office
- Police stations and prisons
- Hospital waiting rooms
- And more

And like all of them we all wait for the return of Christ even the earth around us is waiting.

(SERMON TEXT) Paul said, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Romans 8:18-25)

Patience may not always describe the way we wait. I've been waiting for something for a year. Just before coming home from my deployment, I shipped home my footlocker. It contained a lot of stuff that I need, including uniforms and gifts I had purchased in the Middle East. Well it still hasn't arrived. I've called, been to the right web sites, written letters and emails and I'm still waiting. One day, I'm going to stand here and tell you it's finally made its way home. I believe that because I've prayed about it.

Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

God cares about what we're waiting for. But he also cares about "how" we wait for it.

While they waited

- Noah worked
- Ruth persevered
- Joseph maintained his integrity
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted
- Daniel prayed
- Peter preached
- And Paul worshiped praised God

But not all the folks in the Bible were great at waiting. In a couple places we read about what happened while the Children of Israel were waiting in the desert and how they grumbled and complained and the Bible says God told Moses he was listening and it upset him.

“Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the Lord and the fire died down. (Num 11:1-3)

“Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his promise. They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the Lord. So he swore to them with uplifted hand that he would make them fall in the desert.” (Ps 106:24-26)

How we wait affects our wellness, our peace of mind and even our faith.

Sometimes we have trouble waiting because deep down we're afraid. Afraid that maybe God isn't really listening or doesn't care, or that we won't get the thing or the answer that we want, unsure whether the thing we're hoping for will turn out the way we want it to and that can be hard to face.

If the situation is difficult, fear can be a natural response, but if we stay focused on fear can make us feel worse and lead our thinking down all kinds of paths that increase fear and decrease trust and wreck our peace and confidence.

It depends on what we focus on while we're waiting.

(ILLUSTRATION) Not long before his death, Henri Nouwen wrote a book called *Sabbatical Journeys*. He writes about some friends of his who were trapeze artists, called the Flying Roudellas.

They told Nouwen there's a special relationship between flyer and catcher on the trapeze. The flyer is the one that lets go, and the catcher is the one that catches.

As the flyer swings high above the crowd on the trapeze, the moment comes when he must let go. He arcs out into the air. His job is to remain as still as possible and wait for the strong hands of the catcher to pluck him from the air.

One of the Flying Roudellas told Nouwen, "The flyer must never try to catch the catcher." The flyer must wait in absolute trust. The catcher will catch him, but he must wait.

Trust helps us to wait. To be honest though, some things are easier to wait for than others. I learned a lesson about this recently.

As you may know Dave and I recently went to Walt Disney World with the Gelatt's and the Peters. It was my first trip.

When we started planning the trip more than a year ago, I didn't think I could wait that long.

At 80 days out, Eric and Cindy's daughter Caitlin gave us all something that she made for us to help us count down the days. It was a wire outline of Mickey's head with 80 little Mickey stamped rings of paper attached to it.

And every day we took one ring off.

Even before we left I knew I wanted to preach on waiting, that's why I left the last ring on Mickey so you could have a visual.

Now for a while, I removed the rings and you could hardly tell that time was passing, but after we got down to single rings, it was easy to see our progress. While I was ripping them off, it dawned on me that I was learning something about waiting.

I was waiting with excitement and expectation. There was no doubt, no fear.

We planned; we watched videos and read books about Disney World.

We looked on the Internet and read about other peoples experiences.

I imagined myself there, I looked at it from Google Earth. We did all the usual things to get ready for a trip...and we waited.

I started to think about it and I wondered why I don't wait for other things with the same spirit, or things I pray for with the same level of expectation and confidence.

Instead sometimes, I sort of have a "we'll see" attitude, hoping things will work out, but not sure. I thought, how powerful would it be if I could wait on God with the same level of faith and confidence.

After all, he is more trustworthy and his love more faithful than any earthly thing we count on. It's our attitude and what we believe about God that affects how we wait. Once we returned from vacation, life gave us another opportunity to grow in waiting.

The day we returned and went back to work, Dave was laid off from his job. Now we are waiting again, to see where God will lead him next.

Upon our return we also learned the sad news of Pastor Doug's mom's decline and the period of waiting their family was in.

The Bible encourages us to wait;

- With earnest desire. Ps 130:6.
- With patience. Ps 37:7; 40:1.
- With resignation. La 3:26.
- With hope in His word. Ps 130:5.
- With full confidence. Mic 7:7.
- Continually. Ho 12:6.
- All the day. Ps 25:5.
- Specially in adversity. Ps 59:1-9; Isa 8:17.

Even in the most difficult times, especially in those times, God's word says there is a blessing for those who wait on the Lord. It says they;

- Are heard. Ps 40:1.
- Are blessed. Isa 30:18; Da 12:12.
- Experience His goodness. La 3:25.
- Shall not be ashamed. Ps 25:3; Isa 49:23.
- Shall renew their strength. Isa 40:31.
- Shall inherit the earth. Ps 37:9.
- Shall be saved. Pr 20:22; Isa 25:9.
- Shall rejoice in salvation. Isa 25:9.
- Shall receive the glorious things prepared by God for them. Isa 64:4.

Even if we're not sure how to deal with what we're waiting for, or even how to pray for the thing we're dealing with, Even in times like that God has a plan to help us.

(SCRIPTURE) "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?...

Christ Jesus who died and then raised to life—is at the right hand of God interceding for us. (from Romans 8:26-39)

This assures us that when we wait, we can wait with confidence that God will get us through whatever we have to face. Even when we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, we can count on God to be there for us today.

Even if at the end of waiting, the end result isn't what we wanted, and when we don't understand the whys, there is a peace that waits for those who wait for God and trust in his love.

(QUOTE) Someone once said, "Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter."¹

Every season of waiting is an opportunity for us to see God at work. It's also an opportunity for us to stretch our faith and grow a little bit more in our walk as a disciple.

So, the next time you have to wait, may you be encouraged knowing that you are not alone.

The God who holds the universe in his hands, knows you intimately. He knows what you desire and loves you dearly.

This same God will be there, waiting with you. And that is assurance we can hope in.

Let's Pray:

Dear Lord, you know each of us intimately, every hair on our heads. You know all the things that matter to us, the things we worry about and the things we're waiting for and waiting through. When we find ourselves in that season of waiting help us to remember you're with us. Help us to keep the faith and rest in knowledge that you love us even when we don't understand why things are happening the way they are. May waiting be a teacher for us that helps us learn more about ourselves and draws us closer to you. May we grow in our comfort with waiting. I pray for everyone who is waiting today, waiting for your hand to help, for your touch to heal, for your direction to guide and your wisdom to answer lingering questions. Help us to be still in your presence and wait patiently, persevering, with integrity, full of hope and confidence in your love for us. In Jesus name. Amen.

BENEDICTION: (from Isa 40:27b-31; Isa 30:18)

Why do you say, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

¹ *Richard Hendrix, (Dakota Wizards) Leadership, Vol. 7, no. 3*

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

“The Lord longs to be gracious to you therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!” Go in peace, Amen