

Waiting: Patience and Perspective

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 March 2019

Preacher: Kent Dixon

- [0 : 00] Do you remember when you got engaged? A long time ago. Yeah, me too, actually. Well, someone here this morning just got engaged.
- And I believe he read scripture this morning. Yeah. Welcome, Betty. Congratulations, Betty and Richard.
- If you saw Richard give me the thumbs up, he and I had a conversation and I said, I can, your pastor can say something.
- He cannot say something. Your call, you just let me know. So the big thumbs up was the go ahead. In case you were wondering. So my name is Kent Dixon and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here at Braemar.
- We're going to head into, we're heading into the season of Lent now. So I will be talking about this a bit this morning, but we do have these devotional books. They're just on the table right below the stairs.
- [1 : 07] So if you want to step into Lent in an intentional way, these are there for you and they are free. So I encourage you to take advantage of those.
- This morning, we're going to be continuing our series on waiting. And we're going to be looking at the concept from the viewpoint of patience and the proper perspective that we can adopt while we wait.
- I almost forgot the clicker. We're good. Let's have a show of hands. Who here this morning would call themselves a patient person?
- Larry, Len, Sue, Donna. Yeah, really? That was half-hearted. Okay, so for those of you who did raise your hands, maybe you can offer a class of some kind for the rest of us.
- For the rest of you, you'll notice that I did not raise my hand either. But let me try to make you feel a bit better this morning. Our lack of patience is not entirely our own fault.
- [2 : 16] We live in a society, I think you'll recognize this, our society values immediacy and efficiency. People want what they want.
- They want it instantly. They want it exactly as they asked for. And anything else, anything less makes us grumpy. Right? Right? We get grumpy.
- So when we perceive the slightest, even the slightest delay in our expectations, our likely paper-thin patience will run out like the last few grains of sand in an hourglass.
- There's parents having to explain hourglass later. Pinball was a few weeks ago. Sorry, I'm old. But when we lose our patience or our perspective while we're waiting, losing our cool really isn't that far behind, is it?
- We lose our patience. We lose our self-control. It may not surprise you to know that it's a saber-toothed tiger.
- [3 : 22] Artist rendering. I didn't take it myself. It may surprise you to know that impatience can literally kill you. People who frequently become impatient and angry are in a constant state of stress.

And your body reacts to that stress by releasing hormones such as adrenaline or another one called cortisol, which help the body respond in a stressful situation.

One quote I read this week said that when you're about to be attacked by a saber-toothed tiger, this response can help you survive. When you're sitting in traffic or waiting in a long line, not so much.

It's Dr. Redford Williams, who's an internist at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina. High levels of cortisol and adrenaline may ultimately lead to weight gain.

I hear donuts do that as well. High blood sugar and high blood pressure. So that stress that you feel, feel your blood pressure rise, do you feel that pounding in your ears when you're losing your cool?

[4 : 33] It's not good for you. Williams suggests that the best way for people to handle a situation that taxes their patients and triggers negative responses is to take a deep breath and evaluate what you're feeling.

And I would suggest that for us as Christians, even better than that, we can take a moment to say, God, what are you telling me here? What are you teaching me?

Why am I losing my cool? Ask yourself, is this important to me? Is it reasonable to be angry over this?

There's such a thing as justified anger? I have a sense of anger that comes over unfairness or injustice to other people.

And I believe that's fair anger. But really, is it worth it? Because Williams advises that basically you want to try and talk yourself out of anger.

[5 : 32] And there's perhaps no other quality or characteristic that's as directly related and connected to waiting as patience.

So it's conviction time again. As people who have already this morning confessed to each other that we may not always be patient, as patient as we might like, what lies at the heart of impatience while we wait for something?

And this morning I'm going to suggest three things. The unknown, a sense of entitlement, and a sense of fairness.

And another thing I meant to point out, if you look on the back of your bulletin now, something that we've recently added, it used to just be blank for a place to write notes, but now it's pointed. There are questions there that you can focus on as we go through the sermon each Sunday.

Questions won't change, but the opportunity to glean some things week by week is there for you. So these three things, the unknown, a sense of entitlement, and a sense of fairness, are generally at the root of our sense of impatience while we wait.

[6 : 49] And the first characteristic of impatience is the unknown. And I've talked to you before about how I feel about the unknown.

I'm not a fan, not a big fan at all, in any area of my life. I want to know what's coming next. I want to know the plan, and I want to know what plan B is, even if plan A falls through, just in case.

Can you relate to that? I know many of you can, and I know some of you because I work with you, and you are wired the same way I am. And we've talked before in this series about the anxiety that can come as we wait, particularly if we feel we don't have all the info.

Psalms 37, verses 7 to 9 says, Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Refrain from anger and turn away from wrath. Do not fret. It leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.

[8 : 12] And I want to focus particularly on the beginning of verse 7 here, because we need to receive those two words that we've reflected on previously in this series.

Be still. Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Why should we do that?

Because even though we don't know the plan, there is, my friends, there is a plan, and only God knows it completely.

Good luck trying to figure it out. I've tried. We don't need a plan of any kind for ourselves beyond asking God for direction.

Asking God to guide us through our daily lives. And now I'm not suggesting that you don't go about your daily routine.

[9 : 08] Don't sit on your hands. Go to work. Go to school. For many of you, I'm so jealous, enjoy your retirement. And that doesn't mean you have to be busy while you're retired either.

Do what God has called you to do at this point in your life. But what I am telling you this morning is that trust God in the unknown and surrender your worries to Him.

Because that's the important perspective that we need to try to remember as we wait in the circumstances of our lives. The second characteristic of impatience is a sense of entitlement.

Do you find your patience wearing particularly thin when you feel you deserve something? Or that it's somehow your right to receive something? And then you have to wait for that to happen?

Ugh. This drives you crazy, doesn't it? Whether it's something as simple as waiting in a restaurant for someone to take your order, being chosen for a promotion or a position on a team or something like that, even something like a return phone call or a text message, we sure have an overinflated sense of self-importance sometimes, don't we?

[10 : 34] I'm not saying that it's wrong to seek to stand up for yourself in certain situations. But I think we definitely can take that sense of I deserve this too far.

As we wait, particularly in difficult circumstances, it's important to reorient our sense of entitlement and self-importance to one of dependence.

Simply put, we need to change our perspective from being me-focused, you can guess, to being God-focused.

We need to move from being concerned with what I want, my needs, my plans, to what God wants.

Not just for me personally, but with me in mind as part of the bigger picture. Psalm 130 verses 5 to 6 says, I wait for the Lord.

[11 : 46] My whole being waits. And in his word, I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning.

More than watchmen wait for the morning. And for those of you who know scripture, we take particular notice when words are repeated, when phrases are repeated, this is important.

So watchmen would be waiting for morning, would be watching for enemies. They have one job. They have one priority.

And yet, this psalm, this passage, tells us our job, waiting in the Lord and trusting in his word, is more important than anything else we could possibly do.

We wait not for what we want for ourselves, but for what God wants for us. And not surprisingly, scripture points us back to scripture because it's in God's word itself that we find hope and encouragement while we wait.

[13 : 03] As I've reminded us throughout this series so far, our wants, our plans, our intentions for ourselves almost consistently fall amazingly short of what God wants to do, what God will do for us if we just wait patiently for him to act.

So what about fairness? It's the third root of impatience that I identify. Can you relate to things not being fair?

Do you pout? I pout sometimes. Does your impatience in waiting come from a place of I was here first! It's my turn!

Does that drive you nuts if you're standing in a line and someone just comes in? It drives me nuts. It's not okay that it drives me nuts, but I'm acknowledging that it drives me nuts. I was here first!

You can't just walk in line in front of me. Excuse me, someone, justice, anyone? It's not fair! It doesn't have, you don't have to be a five-year-old to say it's not fair.

[14 : 20] We all say it's not fair, don't we? That's not fair! We pout, we stamp our feet. And that's definitely how I'm wired.

And I recognize that as the root of my impatience sometimes. We may feel a sense of righteous indignation, a sense of what's right, but more often than not, it's what we believe to be right.

And it's as it relates to us personally. We're not looking for the betterment of all mankind. we're looking for, I want what I deserve and I want it now.

Isaiah 30, verse 18 says, Yet 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. waiting on God holds such rich blessing and opportunity for us because it's as we learn to rely on God more and more in every situation that we also draw closer to him in relationship.

[15 : 47] And that comes through reading scripture and praying. As we read in this verse, God will act.

act. It's not a question. God might act. God kind of may at some point show up for you. God will act.

He will act with justice, this verse tells us. And we will be blessed by his action. There's a caveat.

When we seek him first and follow his leading in our lives, there's a bit of a condition that's worth noting.

Hosea 12 verse 6 says, but you must return to your God, maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

[16 : 48] Repeat that with me. Wait for your God always. Scripture speaks clearly to us over and over, reminding us that it's by beginning with God and returning to him.

And I've said this before, moment by moment if we have to, as we wait, where we'll find our balance. And I want to suggest to you this morning that we are people of continual waiting.

Not necessarily out of expectance for something to happen, but out of our recognition for the sense that everything we have comes from God and that we wait on him to provide for our needs.

It's not weakness, as I've said to you before, it's not weakness, it's not laziness, it is correct focus to wait on God. And more than that, as we grow in our ability to wait and trust in God, we'll begin to see him at work more and more.

Because I am convinced, my friends, that we miss a lot. We miss a lot of God at work in our lives because we're too busy working for, striving for, trying to make stuff happen, rather than waiting.

[18 : 28] It's only by trusting God and being still, even in the unknown of waiting. This is so contradictory in some ways. Only by waiting and being still will we ultimately find peace and rest.

So that anxiety that we have, that worry of, I gotta do this, I should have done this, all that sense of weight that we put on ourselves, if we just let go of that, trust that God has us, and he's going to show up, the freedom that can create for you, you'll sleep better at night, I almost guarantee it.

Psalms 62 verses 5 and 6 says, find rest, oh my soul, in God alone. My hope comes from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation. He's my fortress. I will not be shaken.

Say that with me. I will not be shaken. Sear that into your heart. This morning, I encourage all of us to let go of our worries and trust God while we wait.

[20 : 02] my friends, let go and wait on God because our loving heavenly father will catch you.

Does this make you nervous? Are you anxious when I put the reference up? Does anybody remember it?

Take a stab. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.

Let's do it again. Well, give me the cheat first. There we go. Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.

It's helpful to remember it in three chunks. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.

[21 : 05] Nice job. And next week, believe it or not, we'll be concluding this series. And we'll probably come back to a waiting series at some point in the future. Because we just scratched the surface.

But next week, we'll be closing this series as we look at waiting from the perspective of reverence and praise. It's fitting that this coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday.

And it marks the beginning of the season of Lent for the church around the world. And it's funny, in conversations that I've had in the church, different churches over the years.

Some people are steeped in this tradition and understand what it means. Some people don't. Lent is a time of reflection, prayer, and repentance.

And for some, it's a time of fasting from food or from other comforts that allow us to more intentionally focus as waiting people as we lead up to Easter.

[22 : 11] Easter. I have friends that fast from Netflix. I have friends that fast from chocolate. If there's something in your life, not necessarily that you need to give up because it's sinful, but something that you lean on, I'd encourage you to let it go just between now and Easter to give yourself some space in your life, some capacity in your soul and in your mind to focus on God.

And this morning as we consider Lent and looking towards Easter, it's also fitting that this Sunday we celebrate communion together. This morning I'm going to be reading from Luke 22, verses 14 to 20.

It tells us about the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. You can follow with me. It's the NIV. when the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

And he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you. For I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

[23 : 44] And he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

While we enjoy fellowship in many ways as Christians, communion truly centers us on fellowship together as a body with Christ our Savior.

And so we'll be doing communion a little bit different this morning. rather than having servers come forward to receive the elements from me and distribute them to you, music Leah will play while you come forward and receive the elements from me at the front.

So if you're sitting with someone who's not able to come, I would ask that you would take bread and cup with them, you to take back to them. But I felt a sense of this as I was leading up to communion this Sunday, that I am called to serve you as your pastor, and I want to specifically serve you in this way this morning.

[25 : 04] So as Leah plays, I'll come down and get ready, and so when you're ready, please come forward and take the bread and cup back to your seat with you, and then I'll come back and we will partake together.

Well, my friends, my prayer for you is that you will leave here this morning and go into your week with a renewed sense of patience. a renewed sense that God is with you, a renewed sense of the importance of reorienting your perspective on him as you wait in the circumstances of your life.

Now to the king, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Go in peace and have a great week.