

Waiting: Salvation and Hope

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[0 : 00] So last week we began a series called Waiting and we started thinking about that concept of waiting and how it's intimately woven into what it means to be human. And so allow me, it's working, allow me to alarm you.

You know, I read this this morning and I thought, oh my, I made a pun and I didn't even mean it. Allow me to alarm you for a bit this morning because according to a U.S. survey I read recently, people wait on average 20 minutes a day for the bus or train.

28 minutes in security lines whenever they travel. 21 minutes for a significant other to get ready to go out. Some of you, maybe longer. 13 hours a year on hold for some kind of customer service.

38 hours a year in traffic. And those living in big cities may actually wait in traffic more than 50 hours a year.

Human beings spend a total of approximately, get ready for this, six months of their lives waiting in line for things. And that's roughly three days a year.

[1 : 12] Isn't that mind-boggling? The idea of waiting is a fundamental concept not only in our human lives but in our lives as Christians as well. And as I touched on last week, we really are a people of waiting.

And as Christians, we're ultimately waiting for the return of Jesus Christ, our King. Last week, we also talked about how we can miss the point of waiting when we see it only from a self-centered perspective.

Waiting brings impatience, anxiety, irritation, rash action, and so many other less desirable qualities and characteristics. And I believe it's our lack of focus on the purpose and character-building ability that waiting can bring that causes us to experience those less than desirable emotions.

And experience those less than desirable character traits that we've talked about. And as we are a waiting people, it should come as no surprise to us that the Bible offers a great deal of wisdom and guidance as we wait.

And over the next five weeks, we'll be exploring the unique perspective we can adopt towards waiting as we explore a series of themes together. And so this week, we'll be looking at waiting, salvation, and hope.

[2 : 37] Followed by waiting dependence and confidence, wisdom and courage, reverence and praise, and finally, patience and perspective.

And this week, we'll be looking at the topic of waiting with a focus on salvation and hope. And you might be thinking to yourself, but isn't this the most important part of our waiting, the most important perspective?

Isn't that our top focus, our top priority? Doesn't it, does that make more sense for that theme to be the big finish of this series? Well, that's a valid point.

And you're not wrong. The fact that we're saved and we have our ultimate hope in Christ is our main focus. But I'll suggest that this is the idea, this concept is the first one that we need to explore more deeply in our series.

Precisely because it anchors everything else for us as a people who are waiting. Without first reminding ourselves of the ultimate goal and security we have while we wait as Christians, all other truths somehow fall short.

- [3 : 51] If our salvation truly comes from God and is completely His work, just as our unique creation as individuals is, then it makes perfect sense that our first and highest duty is to wait on Him as the source of our very existence and our hope in the assurance of our salvation.

Because, my friends, only by waiting on God can we fully come to appreciate our salvation and what that means. It's when we lose our focus on God and resting in His perfect provision and His complete care for us that we begin to let those storms that come as part of being human, we let those storms crash upon the shores of our lives, don't we?

Psalm 62 verse 1 reminds us, Truly my soul finds rest in God. My salvation comes from Him, as Peter read so beautifully this morning.

I love the use of the word truly in this verse. It's as though the psalmist is saying, Okay folks, pay attention now. This next part is really important.

Truly my soul finds rest in God. Do you seek rest in your life? Because I have to confess that I'm often bad at doing that.

- [5 : 24] When I find myself with time to rest, I'm generally stressed. I look for something productive to do, rather than simply finding the grace to extend to myself to find rest.

With my family, on my own, most importantly with God. I look to occupy that space, rather than let it be.

Humans were created from the very beginning to be vessels. We're designed so that God can fill us and show His power and His goodness through us.

We were perfectly created by a loving God to be in continuous, intimate relationship with Him and seek Him first and always.

And when that perfect relationship was broken, we became even more dependent on Him. Because that broken relationship can only be healed through salvation made possible by Christ alone.

- [6 : 36] So by waiting on God, we're recognizing that only He can meet our needs. Only He completely understands our human challenges and adversity.

As we read in Psalm 62, verse 1, our salvation comes from God and through our relationship with Him. And this is not a one-time commitment relationship.

I'm saved and I'm good. But a loving two-way relationship between beloved child and loving father that you can engage in any time, any day, any moment.

I chatted with the youth last night at their event. And Pastor Luwam asked me if I would share some wisdom and insight. And after I choked for a moment, I said to them, I'm bad at praying.

And they all looked a little bit shocked. And I said, but you know what I've come to realize? I'm actually good at praying in the way God is calling me to pray. So I have an open connection with God.

- [7 : 47] And He and I have conversations all the time, all day. I don't stop and piously fold my hands, drop to my knees and say, Oh Lord, I beseech Thee.

The perfect words are not always the perfect heart. And so I encourage them to not be afraid to talk to God as they would to a friend because He is that close and He is their Father.

So let's continue by looking at Genesis 49 verse 18, where we read, I look for your deliverance, Lord.

Simple words. These words of Jacob come in the middle of an account of his prophecies for the future of each of his sons. And if you read the passages before and after, it falls right in the middle when Jacob pauses and reflects on the sovereignty of God.

And I don't think that's by chance. As Jacob is reflecting on his sons and the very specific prophecies that he has received for each of them, he pauses right in the middle.

[8 : 56] Jacob very deliberately reflects clearly on the fact that his salvation and the future of both himself and all of his sons rests in God alone.

There's a sense that Jacob is not merely giving a passing nod to God's ultimate saving power in his family, but that he has anchored his entire life to that point, as well as the future of his family.

He's anchored all of it in God's salvation. In waiting, God asks nothing less from us than surrender, obedience, desire, and trust.

And the anchor of all of this is the assurance of our salvation, which comes only through him. So for many of us, waiting can seem passive.

Can you relate to that? Sometimes it can even seem lazy. And I reflected on that a moment ago. I tend to try and fill waiting with activity.

[10 : 08] We can feel like in waiting, we're essentially doing nothing more than sitting on our hands. Do you even feel at times that it seems like selfish entitlement to wait on God, as though you're expecting him to do all the work for you?

I confess that I do that. I think, Lord, you must have something for me to do. I'm just not seeing it. But God has taught me, sometimes I need to keep my mouth closed and my hands folded.

And so as I prepared this week, God really impressed something on my heart. Have you ever considered how powerful prayer becomes as an action we can take up during times of waiting?

Active and intentional prayer, especially in times of waiting, is what God is calling us to do. If you want to do something, get on your knees, whether literally or figuratively.

He's not looking for us to plan our steps or to provide for our own needs, and least of all, to have all the answers. He calls us to draw closer to him and spend time with him.

[11 : 22] And it's prayer that keeps us connected and reminds us of the true source of everything in our lives. Imagine a compass. Compass always points to true north.

God is our true north in times when we feel lost and alone. Everything we have is from God, and he is both the source of our salvation and our hope.

Not only for today, but for our entire lives and ultimately for eternity. As Christians, we also have the opportunity to engage the power of prayer as we intercede for others.

We can step into prayer for healing for others, for strength, for peace, and possibly for them to even find their own salvation in Christ.

Let's turn now to Isaiah 64, verse 4. Always feel free to look these up, but you can trust me that they are accurate. And I don't have enough space.

[12 : 35] I was bemoaning this to Michelle this week. I don't have enough space to have my Bible and my manuscript here. So hopefully I'm not shaking anyone's faith by thinking, is he just making these verses up?

Because I am actually putting them in here. So it's trying to do the juggle of holding my Bible. But tell me afterwards. If you'd rather have my Bible up here with me looking up the verses, I will do that if it gives you comfort.

So what we read in Isaiah 64, verse 4, is that since ancient times, no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you who acts on behalf of those who, what's the last part, wait for him.

What a powerful reminder of the unmatched ways in which God acts on behalf of those who wait for him. He's not looking for us to get out in front.

He's not looking for us to make our own things happen, make our own way. That's not what he wants. That's not what we're called to do. To me, there are two great truths revealed here.

[13 : 54] First, obviously, that we are to wait on God. But also, this is exciting to me, that he will act on our behalf in ways that we simply cannot imagine.

Your wildest dreams of what God will do for you and in your life are not even close. Not even close to what his plan is for you.

So how does that make you feel, knowing that the God who knows you more intimately than anyone, your spouse, your kids, your junior high teacher, anyone could know you.

Your God knows you better, deeper, closer. And he will act on behalf of you in ways that you simply can't even begin to conceive of.

Rest in that for a second. Only God himself knows the extent to which he will work on our behalf when we wait for him.

[15 : 02] Waiting, my friends, is not laziness, it is not idleness, it is trust in God. Now this will shock all of you, I'm sure, but I have a theater background.

Surprising, isn't it? And as I was thinking about this idea, I began to think of a big theatrical production. So anytime I've been in a production, in a play or anything like that, I've always been deeply humbled and grateful for the hard work of others.

Because when you go to a big production, do you think about anything beyond what you see on stage? Perhaps not. When you see a movie, do you think of anything that happens on the screen?

Perhaps not. But the hard work of others behind the scenes, their work, when you watch the credits at the end of a movie, have you ever marveled at the list that goes on and on and on of people behind the scenes.

Because the work that goes on behind the scenes of any production is what makes it possible. So consider for a moment that as much as we see happening in our lives, as much as we see occurring day to day, there is infinitely more, and I mean that literally, infinitely more, that God is doing in, through, and for us than we can ever possibly imagine.

[16 : 33] Isn't that cool? Let's turn to Luke 12, 35 to 39, where we read, I had actually pulled out a longer passage and I thought it'll be getting too close to lunch.

Be dressed, ready for service, and keep your lamps burning. Like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. It's such a beautiful passage, isn't it? But it doesn't take long as you reflect on it that it feels a little uncomfortable, doesn't it?

It feels deeply convicting and challenging. Because there are so many different emotions and expectations that we can find there.

And I want you to, here's the awkward part, what words do you think of when you read that passage and think of what it means? Just say it out loud. Ready. Ready.

[17 : 45] Others? Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Alert. Immediately.

There's a deep amount of responsibility, isn't there? Faithfulness. Focus. Preparation.

Attention. And so this, my friends, is where our waiting in daily life connects directly with our waiting for Christ to return and for God's plan for creation to be fully realized.

We don't wait on our own in isolation from what God has planned. God has a plan for you and for me and God has a plan that involves the return of Christ and the ultimate coming and realization of his kingdom on earth.

You don't wait for nothing. Author Andrew Murray puts it this way, the Father who, in his own time, will reveal his Son from heaven is the God, the same God, I would say, who, as we wait on him, prepares us for the revelation of his Son.

[19 : 09] The present life and the coming glory are inseparably connected to God and in us. This is the balance that we seek in our lives as Christians.

We are people of the future as we look forward with hope and anticipation for the return of Christ. But, we are also called to be people of the present as we seek and wait on God in our daily lives until Jesus returns.

If you thought of that, that we are people of the future, but we are also people of the present. I have friends who, as Christians, look to the end of time.

They can hardly wait for Jesus to return and that's amazing. But, they can be so focused on that ultimate coming of the kingdom that they miss what's happening right in front of their face.

They miss how God is working in them, how God wants to work through them, and in the process of waiting for the bus to arrive, they're missing the destinations along the way.

[20 : 32] Because our calling as believers is to be people who live with the future in mind while also keeping our feet firmly grounded, hear that, firmly grounded in the present.

We are not merely people of the future. Our challenge is to be people who are as mindful of what God will ultimately do in all of creation as to what he is looking to do in and through us day by day and moment by moment.

I'll be the first person to say the prospect of that seems somewhat exhausting, doesn't it? But I would suggest that that sense of exhaustion comes only when we're focused on it as something that we need to do in our own strength or with our own plans in mind.

when we surrender our plans to God and return again and again to him in prayer, what he asks for us and of us becomes much lighter.

I was away at our denominational retreat for three days this past week and as I came back I was feeling a bit behind. So as someone who is an organized person and I'm a self-professed planner, I sat down in my office on Thursday morning with the goal of getting at it, getting it done.

[22 : 08] I have a sermon to write. I'm going to be ready on Sunday. And so God had laid on my heart what I wanted to share with you and it was time for me to get working on preparing this sermon.

So in that moment in the quiet of this building God reminded me to seek him first. And begin by submitting myself to him.

So I came into the sanctuary. I came here. I promise I won't lose it. I came into the sanctuary.

I knelt down and I prayed. I prayed for you. I prayed for me. and more than that I prayed for God's blessing to continue to be here in this place and for his desires and his plans to be clear for us.

And then armed with Kleenex I got back at it. This morning we've looked at the idea of waiting with salvation and hope.

[23 : 19] God. And we've learned that as we wait on God we're recognizing that only he can meet our needs. Only he completely understands our human challenges and adversity.

And don't panic because what the slides say is not what I'm saying. And that's a summary and that's okay. He asked nothing less from us. God asked for our surrender, our obedience, our desire, and our trust.

And the anchor of all of that is the assurance of our salvation which comes only through him. Through our salvation God has not tied our hands but he has freed us to be agents.

Somebody who loves fiction and movies and things like that. I love the idea of being a secret agent for God in the world. Isn't that cool? That's pretty cool. And it's not a secret that we need to keep.

That's the best part. And there's infinitely more that God is doing in, through, and for us behind the scenes than we can ever possibly imagine.

[24 : 36] And that's also very cool. I use the word cool a lot. He'll forgive me over time. Our challenge is to be people who are as mindful of what God will ultimately do in all of creation as to what he is looking to do in and through us day by day and moment by moment.

We are now and then. God is to be in Revelation 21 verse 5, God is making all things new.

And that means the redemption and restoration of all creation. Have you ever stopped to think of that? It's not just about us. We're a big piece of it, but it's not just about us.

We're not talking about something that's merely personal, especially in North America. I think I reflect back on it over my lifetime. And the concept of what God is doing and how God is at work becomes very individualistic in a lot of ways.

God has saved me. God has rescued me. I am going to be in heaven with God. And that's absolutely true. Because God does want each of us to turn to him.

[26 : 17] And he wants us to be saved through a personal relationship with him. salvation is not merely a one-time transaction between me and God or you and God that was made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is that. But our salvation is also at work in every moment, not just on Sundays.

But please don't mishear what I'm saying. I'm not saying that salvation is made possible through our own works or anything that we have done or can ever possibly do.

It's about our personal ongoing transformation as we continuously work out our salvation as Paul says, with fear and trembling.

Has that verse ever disturbed you? That verse has disturbed me in the past and so I reflected on it a bit. The use of the word fear in that passage there is not to encourage us to live in a constant state of nervousness and anxiety.

[27 : 27] I'm a worrier sometimes. But what Paul is saying there is that we are to be mindful of the reverence and respect with which we must view our salvation and also our calling as Christians.

We don't take our salvation and put it up on a shelf. so I want to challenge you that as you live as people whose salvation has been assured through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are also called to live as people of hope.

Not only as we wait for the culmination of our own salvation, but indeed for the salvation and redemption of all of creation to be fulfilled.

Amen? And if you're here this morning and you're unsure of that hope, or you're feeling that God can't possibly have a plan for your life, please come and talk with me after the service because I would love to hear your story.

And I'd love to encourage you as we continue together to seek. We are the people of God. We are not person of God. We do this in community.

[28 : 46] We walk together. And so we are here to encourage each other, to build each other up, and to walk together. And so as we continue this series, I'd like us to memorize, yes, there's homework.

I'd like us to memorize Psalm 27, verse 14 together as a key reminder through this series, as awaiting people. And we'll be reflecting on it together each week throughout the series.

So it is there. Let's say it together. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord.

Say it again. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord. Amen.

And next week we'll be continuing our series by looking at what the Bible tells us about waiting with dependence and confidence. Let's pray.

[29 : 50] Father God, thank you that we wait on you. But Father, we don't wait in a vacuum. You are in and with us, at work in us, at work in your people, at work in the world, at work in so many ways that we can't even begin to understand.

and Father, we're humbled to recognize that you are at work in us, day by day, not just Sundays. And Father, you're calling to us to be your people.

You're calling to us to be faithful with the gift of salvation that you've given to us and to share that gift with others. Because Father, this is not a journey about one person, but this is a journey that we do together.

And so, as your people now in 2019, as people who have followed you and recognized you and confessed their love and dependence on you for many, many centuries, we continue in that tradition, Father, and we thank you for your faithfulness, your love, and your care.

and now bless us as we go from this place to eat pasta and enjoy our weeks as the temperature continues to rise.

[31 : 14] Thank you for that. And we pray these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.