

Waiting: Wisdom and Courage

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[0 : 00] So I'll tell you a little secret. I recorded the sermon last Sunday, went home Sunday afternoon, opened the application on my phone, and nothing. There was nothing there.

So I thought to myself, gosh, that's fantastic. I didn't think that at all. I thought, oh, that's frustrating. So I came back and re-preached the sermon from last week by myself in the sanctuary during the week, just to make sure that we had it.

So it was interesting. It was kind of neat to look out and think of all of you as I was preaching that to myself and to God again. So it was pretty neat.

Well, good morning, Braymar Baptist. How is everyone? Everyone is warm-ish? Ish. There's a lot of ish. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my pleasure to be your lead pastor here.

This morning, we're going to be continuing our series on waiting as we look specifically this week at the concept from the perspective of wisdom and courage.

[1 : 08] Clickers working. Good. So as we continue to explore this idea of waiting, certainly from a human perspective, we might see it just as sitting back. Don't you? Do you think of waiting as sitting back, not doing much of anything, just waiting for something to happen?

Does it feel like that sometimes? And during this series so far, we've explored some concepts related to waiting and how we can more correctly focus ourselves while we wait in any situation. But I want to also acknowledge something that we may be struggling with, and I struggle with this as well. Have you been thinking to yourself, You know what, Pastor Kent, you're saying some nice things.

I'll give you that. But what am I supposed to do while I wait? What helpful tips can you give me to wait better, more patiently, more efficiently, more effectively?

How do I know what God wants me to do and when? Am I speaking to you that way? Give me tips, Pastor Kent.

[2 : 15] And we do that with so many things, don't we? We're looking for 10 steps, the best way to do something. A tried and true method that has been pre-tested and proven effective.

Last night, I decided I wanted to make coconut rice. And I'm a cook. I love to cook. It gives me joy. So I thought the first thing I did was I went to Google and I found best coconut rice recipe.

Because I don't know. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to do it. But I want the best. I want the best thing, the best way, the best process.

Fortunately, it turned out well. Because it might have gone really sideways. The first is not always the best, right? So why do you think we like statements like 8 out of 10 dentists prefer this kind of toothpaste?

Because we want to make the right choices, right? Personally, I'd be more comfortable knowing what the other two dentists thought of that toothpaste. But that's just me.

[3 : 19] So if we don't know the answers ourselves, we want to console ourselves with the fact that we have the best possible information or knowledge available before we can take or make any decisions.

But as we said last week, waiting on God focuses on His will for your life, His desires for your heart, His matchless love for you, and ultimately what He will do.

And this morning, I want to consider the act of waiting on God takes both wisdom and courage.

Let's begin by thinking about wisdom for a moment. The idea of wisdom while waiting on God is actually, don't be surprised, quite contrary.

to our traditional understanding of wisdom. When we talk about someone, this is my library, when we talk about someone who is wise or has wisdom, what are some of the words or ideas that we usually associate with that?

[4 : 32] Go ahead and say it out. Smart. Knowledgeable. Others? Other ideas? Old. Old. Ouch. Ouch. Kathy, ouch. You're right, though. Knowledgeable. Someone who knows how to do things.

Someone who has experience. But the Old Testament contains five books that are classified as wisdom literature. And you may have heard that term. And that includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

Don't go read Song of Songs now, by the way. Wisdom literature was a common writing style in ancient Eastern civilizations. And it often dealt with larger philosophical problems or smaller issues that could be addressed with common sense.

And you can imagine that's Proverbs. Not surprisingly, the main difference between biblical wisdom literature and regular wisdom is that biblical wisdom recognizes God as the source of all knowledge.

[5 : 48] And Proverbs 9, verse 10 captures this perfectly to me by stating that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom was the Latin phrase.

I can't remember the Latin at the moment. Of Concordia, now Concordia University, when I attended there. It was very grounded in Scripture, grounded in God at that time.

Not so much now. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom is a phrase that became part of my brain in those early university days. Because simply put, all wisdom comes from God. And it's freely given to us when we come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Because without knowledge and trust, we simply won't wait, will we?

[6 : 51] At least for me, not without a great deal of anxiety. And usually, maybe this is you, this is me too. Usually not without giving up and taking matters into our own hands.

Does that resonate with you a little bit? So as we wait on God in any situation, we have access to his wisdom.

Not just for our specific needs or our given situation at the time. But as we consider what he may be asking of us, as we seek to follow his will for our lives.

God knows. God will reveal it to you in his time. Psalm 25 verses 4 and 5 says, Show me your ways, Lord.

Teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me. For you are God my Savior. And my hope is in you all day long.

[8 : 03] In these verses, the psalmist reflects an inspiring level of understanding to us. When we recognize that God is the correct focus of our waiting.

And that he will act in and through us. And we can also see an additional focus on the idea of hope as we wait.

As we submit to God's will for our lives and place our hope completely in him. He will do amazing things again, both for and through us.

But even more than that, we see the importance of the idea of waiting on God. For our instructions. If you will, our marching orders.

Or when times are really tough and unclear. Our next steps. Maybe you've heard this before.

[9 : 05] But have you ever considered the fact that when you don't feel like you're hearing from God. It may be that he's still looking for you to do what he already asked you to do.

You see, in your desire to keep moving forward. Are you missing what God has already asked you to do? I'm learning more and more to look back at the sense of direction I got from God.

It seems counterproductive almost. But I often will return to, I don't feel like I'm hearing anything from you, Lord. What was the last thing I heard from you?

Did I follow that? Am I resisting somehow? Am I being stubborn, purely stubborn and willful like a child, and not doing what he already asked of me?

Or maybe it's simply, my friends, to be encouraged by the fact that God is just saying, yep, you're doing it. You're on the path. Keep going. Silence is not always bad news.

[10 : 24] Psalm 37, verse 34 says, hope in the Lord and keep his way. And this is the result.

He will exalt you to inherit the land. And when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it. Again, we see an emphasis here on placing our hope in the Lord and our focus solely on him.

Because it's when we rest in God that we'll also begin to more clearly see him at work in our lives and in the lives of others.

I'm sure you've always all heard the expression, or many of you, certainly the older ones of us, hindsight is always 20-20. Isn't that true?

Because when you've taken time to reflect back on the events or circumstances in your life, have you actually been able to see God at work? I have.

[11 : 31] Closed doors are better plans, as we talked about last week. And that's happened to me many times over the course of my life. Bless you.

As I study this week, God laid something very powerful on my heart. Imagine being so centered on God and resting in him so completely that you could see him at work all around you in every moment.

I'm just going to leave that there for a second. Do you see God at work around you in every moment? Because, my friends, he is.

Anyone who follows me on Facebook will see a picture of the cross that I posted this morning. I got here this morning, came up those stairs, was listening to a piece of music that, praise music that's resonated for me in different ways through my life.

It talks about God being our light. Weepy pastor. Every Sunday, every Sunday, came up those stairs, looked down this aisle, and saw the picture that I posted with the sunlight shining on that cross.

[13 : 02] And God said, I am here. And so that's a challenge I have for us all this morning.

This sounds like the end, but it's not. So let's, it's when the pastor says, so I want to challenge you with something you think, oh, thank goodness, it's almost over.

We're in the homestretch. No, out of chance. So let's seek to be people who are so focused on God and his will that we become more and more able to see his work, his creation, his action, and his love for us in every moment.

Don't let the mundane bog you down. Don't let it crush you. Don't let it discourage you because God is there. And by opening ourselves up to seek God first, we will begin to see more and more ways and opportunities where God can use us.

Psalms 39 verse 7 says, but now Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.

[14 : 19] This verse speaks so well to many of the challenges, the main challenge, sorry, that we often face when we're waiting. What are we waiting for?

Do we even know? As we learned last Sunday, this resonates with me and will forever, I think, God gives us exactly what we would ask for if we knew everything that he knows.

Remember that from last week? God gives us everything we would ask for if we knew everything that he knows. But I want to encourage you because don't be afraid to come to God in your confusion, in your anger, in your sadness, in your bitterness.

God gets it. He made us the way he made us for a reason. You are not broken because you are mad. You are not broken because you feel discouraged.

You're not broken because you feel lost. Don't be afraid to ask him, God, what are you asking me to do? Out of frustration, you can ask that question.

[15 : 41] Out of a genuine desire to follow his will in your life, you can ask that question. God, am I on the right track? That's not weakness to ask that question.

It's faithfulness. It's the right focus in your life. God, please make it clear to me if I'm not obeying you in some way.

Show me my stubbornness. Show me my immaturity. Show me how I am disobeying you and make it right.

Point it out. Call me out on it. When we change our focus to wanting God to meet our needs or care for, from, sorry, wanting God to meet our needs or care for us in specific ways, to waiting on him to do what he has planned for our lives, I believe we will see the circumstances of our lives change in amazing and wonderful ways.

It wasn't all that long ago that I was sitting where you are. I wasn't a pastor. I still feel like I'm not quite a pastor up here now, but I'm doing what God told me to do.

[17 : 00] But I know what's going through your heads as you sit there. You think, this is great, but what do I do tomorrow? What do I do knowing that I have that meeting? What do I do knowing that I have that test result coming?

The unknown to us is known to God. Try not to be worried. Try not to overthink it.

I'm speaking to myself right now. Don't overthink it. And doesn't it give you some sense of relief to know that God can take the burden of worry from you?

The burden of anxiety? The burden of self-preservation? Trying to provide for yourself? That God can take that off your shoulders?

So you may be saying, Pastor Kent, that's unrealistic. Great. The Bible may say that. You may say that. But I can't stop taking responsibility for my own life.

[18:02] It's okay to nod. I don't judge. Believe me, I know what letting go of control in your life, the thought of that feels like.

I'm standing here as living proof of that. I lived that way for many years and can tell you many of the ways that God blessed me even while I was relying on my own strength and my own abilities. abilities. But I can also tell you of the many sleepless nights and hours that I spent worrying because I was too stubborn or too short-sighted to give everything back to God and allow his wisdom to wash over my life.

Psalm 106, 13 says, but they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold. Psalm 106 is a hymn of remembrance and one of these days I will unpack the Psalms together and talk about it because I took a course on the Psalms.

Oh, amazing. But that verse reflects a praise and thanksgiving for the great things that God had done for his people throughout their history. But the Psalmist also in that passage recognizes that despite all God had done for them, they forgot about it.

[19:40] And as we humans typically do, they didn't wait for God. You know the story. The Psalm goes on to retell the ways that God continued to deliver his people and provide for them and how they kept forgetting, kept turning away, kept choosing to do their own things, their own way of doing things.

Does that sound familiar? mirror? It's not new. We're not new in our desire to do our own thing, to seek our own way, to make our own way.

Because in the day-to-day busyness of life, it can be so easy to become distracted, can't it? It's why we have Sundays, days. Because we need a break from forgetting and a chance to remember.

To remember that God has a plan for us, and that our story is actually part of his greater story. I don't know about you, but my wisdom often gets really, really shaky when I am afraid.

I lose focus on God's picture. I become bogged down in my own troubles and worries.

[21:17] I stress, I overthink, I overanalyze, I get tangled. But while in the bigger picture, many of our worries are not actually worth worrying about, will your car start?

It doesn't really matter. Stay home. Do they have my coffee at Starbucks this morning, or are they out?

Doesn't matter. Try something else. Have tea. Seriously, though, there are worries that are worth worrying about.

But I want to remind each of us that our worries matter to God. By waiting on God and returning to him day by day or even minute by minute.

I've been there if necessary. In both good times and bad times, we're actually showing the kind of wisdom that scripture is talking about.

[22:21] Michelle and I looked at a framed picture that you could buy that said, what if all you had today is what you thanked God for yesterday?

Yikes. God for your health, your spouse, that rotten cheeseburger you had when you were on the way home from work.

All provision is from God. He won't take it away from us to punish us, but are you grateful for it? it's worth thinking about.

Let's turn to Maximus. No, let's turn to courage now. If you know the movie Gladiator, this is from that movie. If you don't know it, this is not your pastor endorsing that you go and watch it.

It is great. It is violent. Not surprisingly with the title Gladiator. So what are some of the words or ideas that we typically associate with the idea of courage?

[23:35] Your turn. Come on. Thank you. Yes. Strong.

Providing. You must be male. Ready for anything. Tough. In the arena.

We think of heroes as being courageous, don't we? If we're the list, the top ten or even five most desirable human character traits, I think many of us would put courage on that list.

And that's not wrong. But, don't be surprised. Guess what? The courage we're talking about while we wait on God is not really actually how we might typically think of courage. Are you shocked? Psalm 27:14, our overarching verse for this series on waiting, says, you can say it with me if you can, but we'll say it later.

[24 : 43] Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. I paraphrased it a bit there, but the actual verse is at the end.

The idea of strengthening our hearts reflected here is not a traditional sense of courage, but courage that comes from resting in.

It's counter to our idea of courage. Isn't it resting? Waiting on and trusting in God. God. Psalm 31:24 says, be strong and take heart.

Because, put the because in there, all you who hope in the Lord. Our hope in the Lord is what gives us strength and courage.

By waiting on the Lord, we can be strong and take heart. Not in our own strength, but because we hope in the Lord. And both these verses so clearly and directly link strength and courage with placing our hope in the Lord and, if necessary, simply waiting.

[25 : 57] This kind of courage doesn't necessarily take action at all, unless there is a step that God is asking us to take. This kind of courage doesn't face things alone, but it seeks God's will in every direction, in every situation.

The kind of courage characterized by these verses comes from submitting. That's counter to our understanding of courage, isn't it? And waiting.

As Calvin read this morning, one of our passages, Lamentations 3, 25 and 26 says, The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the one who seeks him.

Let this sink in. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Are you good at waiting quietly?

when we place our hope in God first and seek him first, I know this is sounding like a broken record, but it's important stuff.

[27 : 13] When we place our hope in God and seek him first, talking to him before we make a decision, talking to him before we speak or act, or talking to him before we choose not to do things, that is what it means to wait on God.

And I have another challenge for us this morning. We are getting closer to the end. What do our prayers say about our focus as people? Are your prayers the prayers of someone who is asking God to bail you out?

are you asking God to change or fix a situation that you don't like? If God is at work in a situation and has placed you in a situation, he will bring you through it.

And you know what? If you don't like it, tough. Because God is changing you, shaping you, forming you into the person that he wants you to be.

And the person that you are meant to be. And sometimes for metal to be shaped, it has to be put into the fire. It has to be hammered over and over and over again.

[28 : 38] but the end result is always worth it. Are your prayers the prayers of someone who is walking intimately with God at all times, in all situations, and in all things, submitting to his will and plan for our lives?

Last week I confessed that I am someone who is often so concerned about inconveniencing someone else that I'm reluctant to be dependent. I'm actually reluctant to let someone else help or serve me in a way they might actually even be called by God, simply because I can't let go of my own insecurities.

That's sad. In a way I suppose I may often think that by not approaching God in every situation I'm facing, I'm taking responsibility for myself.

See how foolish that is though? In not seeking God's input and leading at every opportunity and in every moment of our lives, we are missing out.

we're missing out not only on the greatest and most perfect relationship we could possibly imagine, but we're also missing out on the opportunity for God's ultimate knowledge of all things to be set loose into and through our lives.

[30 : 23] See how crazy that is? So in light of that, do you see how our traditional understanding of wisdom and courage fall far short of the amazing gifts of wisdom and courage that we can accept as we wait on God?

my friends, be wise in seeking God first. Seek him first in every aspect of your life. And take courage. Be brave in trusting. Don't be scared. Don't be afraid of what lies ahead. God knows.

he's always with you and his plans for you, not your plans for yourself. God's plans will always be greater than you can ever possibly imagine.

And so homework time again. Are we ready to say our series verse together? No cheating. People are looking it up. I see you. Don't think I don't see you.

[31 : 43] So hopefully from memory this week, nod if you're good with memory. Shake your head if you're not. No judgment. Not good. Michelle's shaking her head. In the interest of harmony in my own home, Psalm 27 verse 14 says, wait for the Lord.

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

Yes, wait for the Lord. Lord. So next week we'll be continuing our series by looking at what the Bible tells us about waiting with patience and perspective.

let's pray. Father God, thank you for your wisdom which you freely give to us when we put our trust in you.

You know every challenge we face and every decision we need to make. Forgive us for the times that we try to figure this life out on our own.

[32 : 57] we need you. We need your wisdom to guide us and your courage to help us to rest in the unknown while we wait for you in all areas of our lives.

We pray that through our waiting others will be encouraged and turn to you. Amen.