

# Waiting

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[ 0 : 00 ] The waiting is over. It's done. Weeks of wondering. Weeks of watching. We were all wondering where we would cast our votes.

The nation was poised for the results. And now it's over. Kevin Fletcher and Oti Mabuse are crowned for Strictly Come Dancing.

I think there was another election and vote this week as well somewhere. What are you like at waiting? What are you like, what are we like at waiting and watching?

How many of us find it difficult to watch and to wait for something to happen? If you listen to these stats that apparently each year we spend 13 hours on hold, waiting, waiting for a reply.

I did put in there, that's just for the health centre. But it was... The average person spends about six months waiting in lines.

[ 1 : 06 ] We Brits love it. If we can't find a line, we'll search for one to just queue up and wait for something. The stats go on. And here we are in the third Sunday of Advent, a time of watching and a time of waiting.

And it says in our scripture, be patient, brothers and sisters. Be patient until the Lord's coming. But what do we do while we're waiting?

You see, firstly, I'm going to ask for forgiveness by Mandy. I'm glad she's not here, but she'll listen later. She knows that I have the patience of a gnat, really, for waiting.

And you know that patience of, especially when you're shopping for clothes, ladies. And I have sat outside of waiting rooms just longing, longing for the Lord to come again.

Maybe I'm not alone in that. But I think it may be a common bond that we have across this world, you know, because when you're shopping with your wife, your girlfriend, your partner, your daughter this Christmas, have you ever noticed how the Lord has heard our cry?

[ 2 : 25 ] Because they place now outside of these rooms, these comfy chairs. And if you go to the real posh shops outside of there, they even put magazines for you as well, and refreshments.

The issue comes, though, is when you're at your sixth shop and the reply comes, I think I liked the one in the first.

What are we like at waiting, brothers and sisters? I want to advocate that active waiting is good.

Because so often, I think this is what James is encouraging us to do in our reading.

You see, we are waiting for Jesus to come again. And there's got to be something that's really exciting and energizing about what that is. We are waiting in anticipation.

We are waiting in faith. And we should be excited. And that should be reflected in us, his church, not looking like something in those pictures at all.

[ 3 : 34 ] And Jesus promises that he will come again. You see how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop. Patiently waiting for the autumn and the spring's rain.

You too be patient and stand firm. Because the Lord is coming. The Lord is near. Men, women and children, the Lord is coming.

It speaks of his anytime arrival. Jesus was very clear about that. We're not going to know the hour. We're not going to know the date. We're not going to know the time. So therefore, we should be ready, waiting and watching.

And often, let's be honest, our temptation is to fall asleep on the job. Because waiting can create a huge amount of lethargy in us.

And I think to wait means to look for and expect. And I hope that you're expecting. My energy levels have been really high this year.

[ 4 : 40 ] There is something that is happening. There is something that is different about this Advent. I sensed it this morning. We were just praying in the prayer room.

And there was a fresh sense of energy as people were coming through. There was an expectance. There was an excitement. There was a buzz. To wait means to look for and expect.

And I am expected. And to be honest, I am excited. I get enthused. As you know, Christmas for me, I'd like to spontaneously combust. It is that exciting.

If you've read from the beginning of James, you will see they're having a few tough words. The people have become indulgent and were oppressing others. Yet in these verses, it's a reminder. It's this wake-up call that James is saying to this church. Let's be honest. It's a great wake-up call. Get some excitement back in there.

[ 5 : 35 ] Get enthusiastic. Watch and wait. Now, for those of you who know me, and I'm doing it now, I can't sit still for very long.

I have to be on the move. And it's something about being alert and not just being passive in what we do.

I thought that the thing at the beginning was very good, you know, older than Clive. I did give Isaiah some ideas of what he wanted to write. But this idea, many of you will remember if you were back in sort of World War II and into the 50s and probably into the 60s.

Do you remember those signs that said halt before the new shape signs came in? Halt. You know, it was quite a demanding word, wasn't it?

Halt. We must stop. We must do that. Here. No further. That is it. Halt. Halt. And I'm wondering whether the church has got caught up with this halt thing.

[ 6 : 38 ] Because for me, halt is a helpful acronym. Because halt for me is hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. And I think that speaks to the totally opposite of what we should be as church.

Because in a Christian context, when I'm hungry, I need feeding. And the church needs feeding. And often because the church is lethargic, it's because I believe it's through lack of teaching and energy.

If I go into a meeting, if you see me with a big bag of wine gums, you will know that I've gone to that meeting because my sugar levels are low and I need a real bump up to get my energy back.

And so I think there's this thing about don't hang about with this idea of being hungry. Get fed.

Angry. Angry.

Angry just diverts us. Angry just diverts us. And sadly, we've heard it all the way through the elections. And, you know, anger just diverts you from actually what the job is in hand.

[ 7 : 47 ] And there is no place for that, I believe, within when we're expecting and we're excited for the Lord coming again. Lonely. We are made for community. We aren't meant to be lonely.

We are made as a people of God for community and for the community that we are called to serve. There is no reason. If I'm tired, if I'm tired, I just fall asleep.

I need to be awake. I don't want to miss kingdom opportunities. Hort has got no place in our active waiting because he is coming again.

Jesus says, keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. So, what will Jesus see when he comes?

What will he see? What is he expecting of us, his church, in our active waiting? What is he expecting for that moment when he comes to find us, his church?

[ 8 : 53 ] And when it's said at the end, the judge is waiting at the door, I want him to find us active, alive, engaged, because it's spoken here about harvest.

Because people have had the joy and privilege when he comes of knowing who they're expecting to come again.

And that is for us to introduce people. Maybe you're here for the first time. Maybe you're visiting. Maybe you come week by week.

This is what Jesus wants us to be attractive and alive in our lives as we go out this week. Not tired, not hungry, not lethargic, but to tell about the good news that is here and that he's coming again.

And that is something worth getting excited about. Maybe to be active in your Advent waiting. To watch for the signs of the Holy Spirit, not only in ourselves, but in the lives of other people and in the lives of our community.

[ 10 : 08 ] To be alert to the signs and wonders and opportunities and join in with what he's already doing. Because they're there if we see them.

To be alert to people to join us. Come and join in. Don't be lonely. Don't be fearful. Don't be hungry.

Come and join in what we're doing. This is good. And prayerfully watch and wait and be ready to respond to his prompting. And most of all, most of all, seek him.

Seek him. Because we will be amazed that we are a work in progress. Ruth Bell Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, the evangelist, saw a sign by the side of the road.

It said, end of construction. Thank you for your patience. Apparently she turned to Billy and said, I would like that on my gravestone.

[ 11 : 12 ] Listen, we're all under construction.

We're all a work in progress. And I pray for us this morning as we are active and have energy in our waiting, in our watching for Advent.

So alert, active in our waiting, fully alive, that people will see that in us. And engage with the Jesus that is coming again.

Should we do that? Should we do that? Should we ask for that? Should we ask afresh for more of that energy and excitement? That buzz that suddenly may for many disappear on Boxing Day when they think that Christmas is finished.

And they put it in a box again for another year. No, 2020 for us is an exciting year where people will know that Jesus is coming again and we'll live like it.

[ 12 : 32 ] We'll live like the kingdom is near.