

Waiting - 24th July 2022

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[0 : 00] Our subject this morning is waiting. I'm not very good at it. Not very good at waiting at all.

How good are you at waiting? Well, let's see. Come on, darling. Come on.

Come on. What's going through your mind?

I heard it from somebody. Hurry up. Get on with it. We're always wishing our lives away, are we not? On to the next thing. I want my lunch, said somebody. Never, ever waiting.

Sing. 25 years ago, Jan and I had this song I'm about to play at the start of our wedding service. We'd waited a long time before we met.

[1 : 07] In fact, we're in our late 30s. And we were both 39 years old when we got married. People had given up for us, on us. They thought, well, we've waited that long.

It's never going to happen. So have a listen. See what you make. It's not a Christian song, but the words carry meaning. The clouds have cornered my life again The horizon has blinded my sight again And I know I must be strong Carrying on alone Whenever my dreams of storm Till morning You were there An angel A blessing

No, I could not see your smile And I'm defenseless Like a child And I've been waiting And I've been crying And I've been loving Loving Loving Loving Loving Loving You Loving You You were the one I wanted To live for You were my life

How could I ever ask for more Still my mind went on believing That you never would be leaving And I've been waiting And I've been crying And I've been loving Loving you And I'm waiting And I've been crying

And I've been loving Loving you So many have had to wait to get married of late because of the circumstances.

[4 : 55] And, yeah, those words carry a lot of meaning. But what about this waiting business then? Well, here's the culprit. Instant coffee. That's the one.

We go to the hatch after the service and expect it to be there. If it isn't in that cup, we've got issues. That's modern life. Everything ready in an instant.

Instant buying. We no longer need to wait until we have the money. Just go and buy it. Wave a bit of plastic around and you're done. Right? It's become so easy.

And so we go on. We've got this instant lifestyle. Turn on the tap and we get clean water. Turn on the switch and we get light or power.

Jump in the car and we can go somewhere. Why would something be closed? Yeah? Why would something be closed? Shouldn't it be open 24-7? Send an email in seconds.

[5 : 55] Not a snail mail, handwritten letter for goodness sake. Text a friend. Send. Get cooked food in minutes. Don't bother with a library anymore.

It's all on the internet. Instant information. Life in an instant. And so it is with our Christian life. Let's pray and we expect an instant answer.

Come to church and get an instant blessing. Expect to understand God in an instant. Perhaps we're not that naive.

But we do expect to have a Bible. To be able to open it. And find a passage in our own language. In modern English. That simply wasn't the case centuries ago.

Faith was far from instant. First of all you'd probably walk to church. You'd be lucky to have access to a Bible at all. And you'd be lucky.

[6 : 59] If you did. That you were able to read it. Perhaps the whole church service was in Latin. There's a good tip. You know.

It wasn't the case. It wasn't the case. And actually, I would argue that life is really about waiting. We may jump in a car. But actually.

It's a relatively slow process. Of manufacturing parts. Assembling them. Testing them. Before the car is anywhere near ready for us.

There's no such thing as instant coffee. A bean needs to grow. It goes through much travel. And a whole process. Before it ever gets to us.

Money needs to be generated. Bills and taxes paid. Before we can start buying anything. Water comes from a whole process.

[7 : 56] Before it's ready for us to use. And it's exactly the same with electricity. Nothing is actually quick. Nothing actually happens.

In an instant. For those who trust in God. Waiting is so much a part of faith. In Psalm 40.

I waited patiently for the Lord. And he turned to me and heard my cry. The waiting is in response to a cry. A cry.

How often do we cry out to God when times are hard? And often the answer is simply. That we just need to wait. In Psalm 130.

I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits. And in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord. More than watchmen wait for the morning.

[8 : 55] We do. We put all our hope in God. Here it says my whole being waits. My whole being. Every part of me just waits. Knowing that God can be trusted.

His word is true. We can rely on him. But just wait. I don't know if you've ever been up all night waiting for the morning. Or you just simply can't sleep.

The coming of morning seems to take forever. Each moment. Each hour. Seems to take so long than it would normally do during the day. But we wait.

Have a look at this video. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

And the child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was on him. And the way he was on him. Every year, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

[10 : 07] over. When he was 12 years old, they went up to the festival according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

But they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day.

Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished.

His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Why were you searching for me?

[11 : 24] He asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house? But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

If you're familiar with this story, I don't think we normally think of it as waiting. But it is. In the Gospels, we learn of Jesus' birth.

And this is part of his growing up. But it's a long wait until his ministry begins. In Luke 3.23, Now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry.

That's a pretty long wait. Saying you'll start your career at 30 would not go down well in today's society.

[12 : 41] What are you waiting for? Get on with it. That's what we're told. And all our society is geared up to rushing ahead like that. So what was Jesus doing with his time?

Well, in this story, he was asking questions and gaining understanding. We're told he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

Growing in stature is perhaps the easiest thing to achieve when you're young. Have you noticed how each generation seems to get that bit taller? I wonder when it will stop, but there we are.

But growing in wisdom, that does take time. And it's often complained about that young people are not terribly sensible or wise, isn't it?

And that's perhaps because we're rushing them through things too quickly. So waiting, listening and learning. We're in so much of a rush.

[13:50] We grab. We move on. So much so that in fact we learn very little. And particularly from our elders.

And I think that's a huge problem in our society. We don't learn enough wisdom from our elders. We're in favor with God and man.

Now that's really hard to achieve, especially overnight. It's not about being well-known celebrity, is it? Or popular with the crowd.

It's not that. It's about developing your character, your integrity. Having an open heart and taking your time.

It's amazing, this story, because it just sort of slipped in, isn't it? We start with the birth. We have this little story. And then suddenly, Jesus is 30. He wasn't just doing carpentry for 30 years.

[14:54] Okay? So the waiting. The waiting. In Exodus, Moses has led the Israelites out of Egypt. And they're on their way to the promised land.

Except it takes them 40 years to get there. It's not that far. Okay? And they wander around in the wilderness. Seemingly wandering aimlessly around.

Just waiting to enter the promised land. You know, looking at their sundials and wondering when it's going to be. But in their waiting, that's when they learned so much.

That's when possibly they became God's people and God's nation. They learned how to depend on God. I mean for everything. So here we've got manna and quail.

You know, their food. Everything. Where was that coming from in the wilderness? They learned how to see things God's way. How to live together. And boy, did they find that hard.

[15:58] And they were given the Ten Commandments. Wisdom for their generation. And in fact, every generation ever since.

If you think of the significance of those Ten Commandments. So that waiting was worth everything. Without the waiting, it wouldn't have happened.

And then in Acts. Jesus is taken up to heaven. So on one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait. For the gift my father promised. Which you've heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

So there we have the disciples. What are they told to do? Get on with it? No. They're told to wait. Wait for the Holy Spirit. Wait.

[16:57] Wait and see what God will do. If it all happened in an instant, would they have really been prepared? Would they really have understood?

But look at the effect that had both on them and for everyone around them. And of course, for every generation ever since.

You know, God used the Holy Spirit to equip them to share not only the good news, but deliver the whole ministry of what it means to belong to God.

And we're living with those things now as well. The modern world waits for no one. So many are left behind in our society.

Especially the slow or the weak. We have no time for them. We can't wait for them. They need to get on with their lives, don't they?

[17:56] Get on with it. We see so many suffering. But have we really time for them too? Hopefully it will all be sorted out. That's what we're told.

Give to this cause. Give to this charity appeal. And it will all be sorted out. Please don't misunderstand me. It usually has a huge, huge impact. It really, really does.

But it doesn't sort it out overnight. And have we got time for illness? For suffering? For the needy? Have we? The world moves on and leaves people behind. Many feel lost and bewildered.

We think we know where we're going. But perhaps we're really wandering aimlessly. But look.

[19:16] Can you see God in this picture? It's not a correct answer to that one, by the way.

We are not alone. God is with us. God is waiting right next to us. God is waiting right next to us.

You might not be able to see that. But from Matthew. They shall call his name Emmanuel. Which translated means God with us. We're very good at focusing on that at Christmas.

But perhaps not for the rest of the year. Emmanuel. God is with us. He is waiting right next to us. Not somewhere else.

Okay. He's waiting right next to us. He's there. He is in the very act of our waiting. The in-between times.

[20 : 17] That's where he is. In the in-between times. That's his name. Emmanuel. God is with us. The waiting is not pointless. Because he is there.

Working patiently for us. And through us. Moulding us. Preparing us. Seeing us through. Hold firm then.

Wait patiently. Know you're not alone. Grasp his hand. Know that you're loved.

Through and through. You will be set free. Free indeed. Free to live. Free in his care.

Hold firm. Wait patiently. Know you're not alone. Because you can grasp his hand. And know that you're loved through and through.

[21 : 22] You will be set free. Free indeed. Free to live. Free in his care. Repeat. Repeat.

And repeat. But the waiting does end.

And better things are coming. Are you up for a bit of drama? Yes, I hear you say. Oh good, that's nice.

Just a short bit. Okay. At the station. As I say, the waiting does end. And better things are coming. I'm going to play the part of the train driver.

Okay. Which leaves you with very few words. But it'll do. Now, we'll have a practice. And then we'll do it as though you mean it afterwards. Is that okay?

[22 : 26] Right. So here we go. Your bits are in black then. Okay. Don't say everyone. That's you. Okay. Right. Come on everyone. It's time to get on the train.

Who do you? I'm the train driver. I've come to take you home. Why do you want to leave your baggage? Leave your baggage on the platform.

For this train is freedom bound. What made you think it was a steam train?

You've been watching too many movies. You have. All right. There you go. This is an express.

Okay. Right. Okay. I'll give you five out of ten for that. Okay.

You ready? Come on everyone. It's time to get on the train. Who do you? Who do you? I'm the train driver. I've come to take you home. I'm the train driver.

[23 : 28] I need to get on the train. Leave your baggage on the platform. This train is freedom bound. Who do you? There you go.

And I've got for you some copies here of the station timetable. Okay. If you'd like one afterwards. It says leave your baggage on the platform. For this train is freedom bound.

The station timetable. It is really thoughts from all sorts of people. From St. Gustin to R.S. Thomas and so on.

Lots of different thoughts on waiting. Okay. So if you'd like one of them. Just come and grab one from the front later on. If Ian's in the way. Just push him aside. Okay.

Okay. Thank you very much. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

[24 : 23] Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.