



The Trinity Pulpit



Worth the Wait

Acts 2:1-13

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Today is Mother's Day and this day reminds us of many things. For some of us, it is the memory of one who loved us and who has now gone on to be with the Lord. For others of us, we are blessed to still have our Mom's with us. Many of us will take the time today to make sure our Mothers know we love them and care for them. Mother's Day is also a day that reminds us that many times the things that are important in life come to us slowly.

The birth of a child does not happen in a moment of time. It begins many times with a strange feeling. This feeling is followed by nausea and sometimes more pronounced sickness. There are all of the changes in the woman's body as the baby begins to grow. There are the days of energy and the days of exhaustion. There are those strange cravings for food that you have never liked before. There are the emotional mood swings from joy to depression. There are times you cry because you feel poorly and sometimes you cry because you are so excited and times you cry for no reason at all. There are the moments of anxiety with each check up and ultrasound. Then of course there comes those final few days of what I like to call waddling and waiting.

Then of course the birth process begins. It begins with pain and continues with increased pain. As men, we will never know the pain that women go through to have children and, of course, we all know that if it were up to us to carry the babies and give birth that the human race would have ended centuries ago. Yet, with all of the anxiety, emotion and pain of a pregnancy and child birth, I have never heard of a mother holding her new born baby and saying it was not worth it. Of course it was worth it, because things that are important are worth the wait.

For those who are adoptive parents here today you also know something of waiting, hoping and longing for the day that your child would become yours. You know that after all of the interviews, waiting and praying that the first time you saw your new child and heard them call you Mom or Dad that the wait was worth it.

Mother's Day reminds us that the things which are important in life are worth the wait. The Day of Pentecost has the same lesson for us. Today is the day we celebrate the Day of Pentecost on the Christian calendar. The Day of Pentecost is the day we remember the event described in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit came and filled the followers of Jesus and empowered them for the work of the church. We view the Day of Pentecost as the day the church was truly born.

It is interesting that we do not give more time to Pentecost. It is an important day. At Christmas we celebrate that coming of the Christ child. We remember that God has been faithful and that all of the waiting and longing for the messiah was worth it because God came in his own time and at the right time in all of history. At Easter, we celebrate that God through Jesus has kept his promise to raise Jesus from the dead. We were again reminded that the disciples had to wait those agonizing days between the cross and the empty tomb but, when they saw Jesus it was worth the wait.

Then there is the story of the Day of Pentecost. The resurrected Jesus has been with his followers now for 40 days. He has appeared to them and taught them and commissioned them to go into the entire world. As Jesus prepares to ascend into heaven he reminds them that he is going to send the Spirit to them. They are to go and wait on the Spirit to come. They are to wait for the promise of God to come true again. Jesus had already told them there would come a day when he would go to the Father and he would send the Spirit and the Spirit would guide them and teach them to observe all things he had taught them. The Spirit would enable them to do even greater things than he had done. It is a little sad that we do not celebrate this day like we do Easter and Christmas because the coming of the Holy Spirit is the birth of the church and the Holy Spirit is the very person of God who enables God to dwell in our hearts and for us to know God in a personal way. We must always

remember that God the spirit is as much God as God the Father or God the son Jesus Christ.

So when we come to Acts 2 we find the disciples all together in the room in Jerusalem waiting. They were waiting on God. They are waiting for the power of God to come. Then it happens. We are told that while they are together the Spirit comes. It comes in a powerful and wonderful way. The description by Luke is one of creative writing to describe the power of the Spirit. It was like tongues of fire rested upon them. It was like a roaring wind swept into the place they were gathered. The description of this event is of supernatural terms. It is the kind of description we make of God's work in our lives when we have had an experience with God that we can not really explain. We know God has spoken or God has performed a miracle in our lives and we try to put into words what has happened and how it happened and what it meant to us. That is the kind of wording we find from Luke. God had come into the midst of these followers of Christ and it had changed them and empowered them in a way they had never experienced before. The result is that they go into the streets of Jerusalem and begin to share the good news of Jesus and what God has done through Christ. Because they have waited on God for this moment and because this is God's work and not theirs, then others are blessed as well.

Others hear about Jesus and what God has done through Jesus and it does not matter who they are or where they are from or what language they speak. They learn that the gospel message is for them and it resonates in their hearts. They are perplexed and amazed that they hear the wonders of God in their own language. They ask what it means and Peter gives his first sermon that tells them that the promise of God that they had all been waiting on had arrived. The Day of the Lord that had been promised in the prophets has come in the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, the followers of Jesus who waited on the Spirit of God go into the streets to tell others who have been waiting on God that the Day of the Lord has arrived with Jesus and it has been worth the wait. What was the outcome of this one moment of waiting on God? It was that 3,000 were saved and baptized. Waiting on God's timing is always worth the wait.

What I want us to realize today is that the Day of Pentecost is another reminder of what God tries to teach us over and over again through the biblical witness. There is in the Bible a continual process of God's promise, our waiting, and God's faithfulness to fulfill the promise. Most of the Bible is about waiting for God to

act and learning to trust God in the process of waiting.

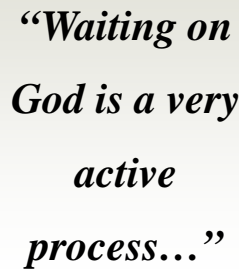
Abraham and Sarah are promised children, but they have to wait on God's timing. Joseph has to wait in jail until God is ready for him to become the second in charge in all of Egypt. The people of God have to wait as slaves in Egypt for God to raise up his deliverer Moses. The Israelites have to wander in the wilderness and wait for God's timing to enter the promise land. The people of God have to wait in exile in Babylon while God works in the history of the world for their return to Jerusalem. The people of God have to "walk in the darkness" as they wait on the promised Messiah only to discover the God has sent Jesus to be the light of the world. The disciples have to learn to

wait on the promise of the Holy Spirit to be empowered by God. In each and every event what occurred was this process of God's promise, our waiting and God's moment coming fruition.

I want us to understand that waiting on God means not only the end is worth the wait, but the waiting itself is of worth. In other words, when we wait on God we discover that we are not idle and God is not idle. The waiting itself becomes part of the promise. What makes this process worth the wait?

First, waiting on God develops patience in our lives which leads to trust. The disciples are told in Acts 1: 4-8 that they are to wait for the Spirit to come. The disciples are not the patient type; in fact, they ask Jesus "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:6) There are two things to notice about their question. First, they were still thinking in small terms. Even after being with Jesus and experiencing the resurrection they were still asking about Israel. They were still thinking about establishing an earthly kingdom. Second, they believed that now was the time for Jesus to act. Jesus answer is "it is not for you to know the times or the dates that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and you will be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:7-8)

Jesus tells them now is not the time nor is God's plan your plan. God's plan is much larger and God's timing is something that God controls and not us. The disciples are going to have to be patient. Notice what they do. They learn patience. They go to the upper room in Jerusalem and they wait. They wait for the Spirit to come. They exercise patience and as they do they are learning to trust the promise of Jesus and the timing of God.



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The process of waiting on God develops in us a quiet patience that yields trust in God's plan and God's timing. The Bible over and over again commends patience as a characteristic of followers of Christ. Paul lists patience as a fruit of the Spirit of God in our lives. We are told that love is patient, and we are to be patient in affliction. Paul tells us to develop perseverance and patience. The Psalmist cries out "I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined and heard my cry."

Patience is an important quality in our lives for two reasons. One is that the goal of the work of the Spirit is to create in us the character of God. We know that one of the qualities of God is patience with us. Thus, patience is not only good for us but it is a godly characteristic. The other reason for patience is that it does help us learn to trust God.

God needs us to trust him so God can ultimately do with our lives what he desires. Trust is essential in this relationship. It is trust that allows God to create character in our lives and it is trust that enables God to bless us and to bless others through us as we give witness to God's work in our lives. Waiting on God means patience and the development of trust.

To wait on God is of worth because waiting develops obedience which leads to faithfulness. Our text reminds us that Jesus told them to go and wait for the Spirit. What I want us to notice is that they were obedient to this command. They did what Jesus said. They became obedient and their obedience led to being faithful while they waited. We are told that while they waited on the Holy Spirit to come they met together, they prayed and they also made decisions. They went through the process of choosing a replacement for Judas. This decision was filled with prayer, discussion and action.

Waiting on God is a very active process. When we wait on God, it does not mean we do nothing. In fact, waiting on God might be one of the most active things we ever do. Waiting on God means to pray, anticipate and to act faithfully today. To wait on God does not mean we do nothing it means that we obey God's word and we are faithful to God to the best of our ability today. We face whatever we must face today and do our best to be pleasing to God today based on what we already know from our past moments of trusting God. That is what the disciples do. They wait but as they wait they become obedient and faithful to the task that is presented to them as they wait.

That means while we pray and wait on God to bring a

change in our lives, we are still as obedient and as faithful as we can be in our present situation. While we pray for a new job we are faithful to the one we already have. While we pray for someone we love to change, we are faithful in that relationship and might discover that God is changing us. While we wait for God to provide for us and bless us with success we are faithful stewards with what we have right now. While we wait on God to bring us comfort and strength, we are faithful to declare the peace and comfort we already have from God. While we wait on God to give us a great testimony, we learn to be faithful to share the story we already have with God. Waiting on God means obedience and being faithful today.

James T. Laney, President of Emory University, wrote an article in 1976 entitled "To Will" where he makes an important distinction between two different forms of **a c t i v e w i l l i n g** :


This leads us to think that our will - our capacity to order and direct and intend - is primarily an agency of domination or shaping. In the Scriptures, however, the emphasis is less on the will seen in these forms than on the will understood as our capacity to be attentive, to direct our attention, to listen. Hence the recurrence in the Psalms of 'waiting' upon the Lord. The posture here is not passive, but is inwardly alert. We are told that they who wait upon the Lord in this sense will renew their strength.

Maybe some of our exhaustion in the church derives from our confusing these two meanings of will - one the active ordering and directing of others and things, and the other an active ordering and directing of our own attention. Only the latter enables us to be receptive and to be nurtured. It alone finally determines the quality of our lives. The classical term for this kind of activity of the will is prayer.

-- Barbara Brown Taylor, ed., **M i n i s t r y & M i s s i o n** (Atlanta: Post Horn Press, 1985), 33.

The waiting on God process is important for this reason. When God is ready to act, God needs his people to be ready to be used by God. So the waiting process is the process that God uses to teach us patience that leads to trust and obedience that leads to faithfulness so we might be ready and prepared to be God's people in the moment God is ready to do something marvelous.

The Day of Pentecost reminds us God's timing and God's plan is ultimately what will bring us blessing and bless others. The disciples could never dream the full



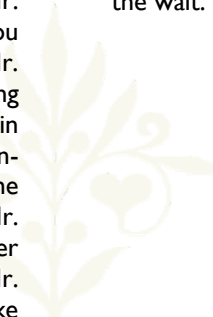
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plan of God. They were ready for Jesus to restore Israel and God was preparing to save the world. God's plan and God's timing is always right on time. Because the disciples allowed God to work in their lives while they waited and because they did wait on God the Day of Pentecost changed their lives and the lives of those around them. God's ways and God's timing is always better than what we would have planned on our own.

Ron Mehl tells a story about a young military man who had just been discharged from the Army and a very successful Chicago business man. It seems that the young man named Roger Simms had been discharged from the Army and was hitchhiking home. A man by the name of Mr. Hanover picked up the young man and gave him a ride to his home. On the way home they exchanged pleasantries and their life stories and then Roger felt compelled to share Christ with Mr. Hanover. He felt a little odd doing so, but finally he said Mr. Hanover I have something important I want to tell you about. Mr. Hanover listened. Roger explained to Mr. Hanover the plan of salvation and how through asking God to forgive us of our sins and placing our faith in Jesus Christ we could be saved. Then something wonderful and strange happened. Mr. Hanover pulled the car over and prayed with Roger to accept Jesus. Mr. Hanover said this is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. Roger was dropped off and Mr. Hanover drove off into the night. They never spoke again. One day Roger found a little business card that Mr. Hanover had given him. He happened to be going to Chicago the next week and decided to go by and try to meet Mr. Hanover. When he arrived downtown in one of those marvelous skyscrapers he found Mr. Hanover's company and office. He asked to see Mr. Hanover and the receptionist said it would be hard but she would try. Roger was ushered into a very posh office and then coming through the door was not Mr. Hanover but Mrs. Hanover. Roger explained his relationship with Mr. Hanover how he had given Roger a ride several years earlier. Mrs. Hanover asked did anything special happen on that ride. Roger told her that yes, he had shared the Jesus with Mr. Hanover and Mr. Hanover had prayed to accept Christ. At that Mrs. Hanover began to sob. Through her tears she told Roger that for years she had prayed for her husband to come to Christ. She thought that God had let her down and that he had never accepted Christ. You see she said after he dropped you off he was in a terrible accident and died that very day. "I thought God had not kept his promise," she said, "but now I find God did something marvelous and was right on time."

There are some things in our lives that only God can produce and there are some things we know that only God can do and God is always right on time.

What are you waiting on God to do? Some are you are waiting on children. You long to be parents, but you are waiting. Some of you are waiting on God to change the heart of another or change this situation at work or at home. Some of us long for God to give us physical strength or a good night's rest. We are praying and waiting on God. Let me encourage you today to wait on God. Let the process of waiting produce in your life patience, trust, obedience and faithfulness so that in God's timing you will be ready. You will be ready when God does what only God can do. In that moment, we always discover that when we wait on God it is always worth the wait.



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