

Title: I AM Waiting

Text: I Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 3:3-13

Key Word: Qualities

Proposition: Everyone will understand a few qualities of God's waiting and commit to a few action steps to his waiting.

Good Morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I am grateful to serve as one of the pastors. We are glad that you have chosen to worship God with us. God is in this place. He is here to reveal his presence so that we can learn to love Him and others, grow to be like Jesus, and serve our world. As a local church, we are committed to reaching people far from God and developing radiant followers of Christ.

Waiting, we are all waiting. We wait in line for tickets at a music or sporting event. Melinda and I are waiting for that one person to make a fair offer on our home. Taxi and shuttle buses wait for passengers at local airports. I saw a mother robin wait for her eggs to hatch. Sometimes the waiting is an ordeal, growing more and more anxious as the time passes, like the waiting in an emergency room or doctor's office. John Mayer wrote a song entitled "Waiting for the World to Change." We wait with anticipation for the new job to begin. The military waits in a state of readiness for the next battle. There are children waiting to be adopted and parents waiting to adopt a child. Some singles are waiting for the next date or that special one. Crime victims wait for justice. The unemployed wait for a job opportunity. The hungry wait for their next meal. Some wait for an apology. The sick wait for healing. Someone once said, "I am still waiting."

Often waiting invites sincere thinking. Some even pray while waiting. One morning I was thinking about all this waiting. A thought came to me in the quietness,

which later I attributed to the prompting of the Spirit. The Lord said, “I AM waiting too. Sometimes I do not hear the Lord clearly. Selfish concerns can distract me. However, I am grateful for God’s patience, giving me opportunities to listen to his voice.

I remembered a story about Moses who had fled Egypt as a fugitive roaming the desert for a long time. He finally stumbled upon a well in Midian. He rescued some women from some cantankerous shepherds. Zipporah invited him to stay with her family. He graciously accepted. He helped tend their sheep and eventually fell in love with Zipporah.

During that long time, the Hebrews suffered under Egyptian slavery. They groaned, moaned, and cried out for God’s deliverance. We do not know exactly how long they waited, but it was a long, hard time. I suspect God was waiting for them to be ready for his deliverance. Sometimes it takes a long time for folks to be ready for God to save them. Truly, his kindness, tolerance, and patience lead us toward repentance. (Romans 2:4) In the mean time, God heard their groaning and compassionately remembered his promise with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God got Moses’ attention one day while tending sheep with a burning bush. God collared him for the first time, asked him to go back to Egypt and deliver the Hebrews. Moses wanted his name. God told him, “I AM Who I AM,” that is my name. Nobody had ever heard God’s name before Moses did, and nobody would ever have known it afterward except for Moses passing it on. Jesus also called himself the I AM. He said, “I AM the bread of life...I AM the living Water...I AM the Way, the Truth, and The Life.”

It is clear to me that the Great I AM still waits. Which leaves me with the question: How does God wait? What are some qualities of his waiting? What will I do with his waiting?

The loving “I AM” waits patiently. Peter who knew God’s patience noted God’s patience in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. (1 Peter 3:20) He later wrote, “*He is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish.*” (2 Peter 3:9) Genesis tells us that after Adam and Eve had sinned and consequently banned from paradise, rebellion, immorality began to flood the earth. The Creator gave them 120 years to change their hearts and lives. Only one, Noah remembered the Lord God. God called him to build a graphic illustration of the message of his life. God likes to use images to drive his point home. Grieving that He had made them, God decided that a do over was needed. During that time, he called Noah to build an ark as an object lesson of his patient love calling them to change their lives. However, they only mocked, ridiculed the ancient prophet who spoke louder with his actions than words.

In the movie, “The Horse Whisperer” Tom Booker, played by Robert Redford, makes use of his special gift of "gentling" horses. A tense, New York magazine editor cannot believe her eyes as she witnesses the gradual transformation of her daughter's horse from traumatized to tamed. In one telling scene, the horse, frightened by the editor's ringing cell phone, gallops off into the far end of a large pasture. Booker walks into the pasture and sits down, where he waits for what appears to be hours. The horse, drawn by its curiosity of Booker’s patient gentle love, walks closer and closer. Finally, it cautiously

approaches close enough to touch the "whisperer," and allows itself to be led back to the safety of its stall.

Friends, God's is like that. In patient love, He "gentles" the untamed or traumatized people who run from him. He waits until they are ready to respond to His presence. Like Booker, we are never more like Jesus than when we patiently, prayerfully wait for others to find healing and peace with Christ. Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians, *"Therefore as God's chosen people...clothe yourselves with compassion...gentleness and patience."* (Colossians 3:12, 13)

The great "I AM" waits expectantly. Peter wrote, *"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."* (2 Peter 3:13) In his first letter, Peter wrote to comfort and to encourage the believers in the midst of great suffering and persecution. Now, years later, when he perceives his imminent brutal death, he writes his last words to people he loves. He warns them not of external threats, but of internal dangers, complacency and false teaching. He reminds them of Christ's return to create a new place for his own. Jesus promised his followers that He would return not only in Spirit, but also in a physical, yet spiritual presence to judge, not only the world, but also those who belong to His Church. He postpones His coming so that unbelievers will have a chance to come to Him and for the church to resist the temptation of complacency.

God expects us to live with eternity in mind. We find it tempting to focus our lives on the now. Our routine tasks become urgent. However, this thinking often creates

unnecessary stress. Most of our problems are not a matter of life and death. Whenever something goes wrong, I try to ask myself, “Well did somebody die?” Dean Smith, the former basketball coach at University of North Carolina once said, "If you make every game a matter of life and death, you'll be dead a lot."

Peter reminds us that a thousand years is like a day. So to help us keep this eternal perspective, what would it be like if we would ask ourselves this question: Will this make a difference hundred years from now? Most of the stuff that stresses us out will not. In fact, it will not make a difference a week from now. Will it matter a hundred years from now if I make this sale, or buy this car? Will it matter if someone is rude to me or if LeBron stays with the Cavs?

However, there are things that have eternal significance. The few years we have on this earth, the small circle of relationships I live in, are a tiny part in the grand scheme of God’s plan for the world. So, we must resist our own importance. We must remember that we are not the center of the universe, or the church, or our community. Life involves more than things that pass away. Life extends into eternity. Only the stuff that affects eternity really matters.

Oddly, God expects us to live in the moment. Peter also said that a day is like a thousand years. In other words, every second of every day is crucial. All we really have is now, this moment in time. So let us love to the fullest. What if we perceived every day as packed with eternal significance? I suspect we would learn to live in the moment, but not for the moment. Paul said it like this, “*For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.*” (Phil. 1:21)

Peter warns us that the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in a flash. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. No one knows when this will happen, not even Jesus himself, but He is coming. It could be today or a thousand years from now. Therefore, **God expects us to live with a passion for Him.** Make everyday, every moment count for Him by living a holy, blameless, and godly life. (2 Peter 3:11, 14)

I love to watch ESPN Sportscenter to catch the highlights of the previous days sporting events. They review all the major games, highlighting key plays or mistakes that contribute to success or failure. They think a particular “turning point” was the deciding event. However, a game is not won or lost by one play. They are decided by a number of factors: the player’s preparations and performance, coaching preparations and decisions, officials, environmental, and fans to name a few. That is why every play matters, because we can control what we can control, our choices, priorities, and actions, which contribute to the whole. Every play matters in our walk with Jesus.

That is why God expects us to live with a willingness to change which the Bible **repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9) Kathleen Mooris wrote in The Cloister Walk, *Repentance is not a popular word these days, but I believe that any of us recognize it when it strikes us in the gut. Repentance is coming to our senses, seeing, suddenly, what we've done that we might not have done, or recognizing ... that the problem is not in what we do but in what we become.* Then we see we want to change knowing that God has something better for us. He is simply faithfully waiting for us to claim it as our own.

The Righteous “I AM” waits faithfully. *“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”* (2 Peter 3:13)

God faithfully waits to make our lives a home of righteousness not only in the life to come, but also in the here and now.

Why did the early church look forward to what lies ahead? Why can we look forward to the new place that God has in store for us? Because we are an Easter people! We are a people who believe in new life, fresh starts and new beginnings. We believe that since the days of Pentecost the Holy Spirit is not only around us, but also in us. Not only did the early church have it. Not only did Wesley Movement possess it. Just as a transplanted rose can bloom in new soil, so can we the church, because we possess the same DNA, a holy glory.

God says, *“Greater is the God who is in you than He who are in the world...We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives within us...We have not been given a spirit of timidity but of power, love, and self discipline...You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”*

Now that we know we have what it takes, what do we do now? We follow in the steps of the early church that reinvented themselves whose purpose is to reach a larger world outside the walls of the temple with a passionate, authentic message about God’s love and salvation. Instead of basing their operations in the temple, they went out to where the people lived and to the places where they worked. They witnessed in the streets as

well as in the temple. Their preaching was not primarily done by certified religious professionals, but by plain ordinary people who spoke the language of the people.

Sometimes they had to change because of serious persecution from temple leaders. So they scattered and wherever they went, they talked about Jesus. The Gentiles had heard the Good News and were drawn to it by the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine how shocking this must have been for Jewish converts to Christianity...that God was accepting, welcoming and embracing Gentiles as they placed their faith in Christ? Maybe they thought that this Christian thing was going to be an ethnically pure movement, for Jews only. Now God was saying that since I accept and embrace Gentile converts you must also. Jesus foresaw with eyes of faith, that they would be witnesses not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but also in Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

You see, God had confidence in them to face new realities with faith and courage as they made adjustments. He believed that their full and complete cooperation would mean that the movement of the Love of Christ would span the globe and cross the ages.

What does that mean for us today? Over 2,000 years only the Good News of Jesus Christ has not changed. However, the ways in which God's people have organized themselves and communicated this unchanging message is always changing. Nothing can remain the same for long if we want to connect with people and introduce them to Jesus our Christ. Like the disciples, this means discomfort and even danger. But, God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit, a life-changing, life-altering power. It is up to us to activate it with faith and love.