The Weight of Waiting

## (Psalm 130:1-8)

I am so glad that you are here today, because I want to share with you from the word of God about the importance of seasons of waiting. The thing is that nobody wants to wait, waiting feels like a burden, and so when we are in a season of waiting it can feel like a great weight on our souls. But we need to understand that waiting is not passive, waiting is active, waiting is prayerful, waiting is spiritual warfare, waiting is preparation and it requires us to practice stillness, quietness, and a receptiveness to the voice of God.

One thing is for sure, whatever season you may find yourself in today, God is working, there is a time, there is a when, and the Lord has said,

"I choose the appointed time” (Psalms 75:2).

Now, for you and I today, that requires a certain degree of trust, a level of faith, and great patience. But the prophet Jeremiah tells us,

“Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift, and the thrush observe the time of their migration, but my people do not know…” (Jeremiah 8:7).

And so, we want to learn to wait on the Lord, to anticipate hearing from God, and especially when we find ourselves in seasons of life when we feel stuck.

As we turn to the Scriptures, we recognize that life is a sequence of periods or seasons of waiting, but God meets us there right where we are, he doesn’t leave us there, he invites us to come be where he is. In the gospel according to John, two disciples were following Jesus at a distance,

“They said, "Rabbi where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." (John 1:38-39).

You see, as you walk in faith you will travel through all sorts of seasons and have all kinds of adventures, because the life of faith is a journey. But the Lord never leaves us where we are and when he invites us to "Follow me" he does so to lead us into new experiences, new challenges, and a deeper relationship with himself and with those in the body of Christ (Matthew 9:9).

And so, I want to invite you to come with me on a journey, to join me in a study of Psalm chapter 130, which is a song the Israelites would sing as they journeyed on their way up to Jerusalem. You see, it doesn’t matter which direction you come from, if you are going to Jerusalem, the only way to get to the holy city was to go up. In fact, the prophet Isaiah said it this way,

“You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up…" (Isaiah 40:9).

And so, they climbed that hill to Jerusalem to worship, which implies to us that worship moves us in the upward direction. That’s why the apostle Paul tells the church,

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2).

Because he wanted us to understand that the life of faith is a journey, it is a climb that will take effort and endurance as we follow Jesus.

In other words, it requires focus, it requires determination and resilience because there will be many seasons, many times when we will find ourselves waiting on God. And we must, because we need him to make a way where there is no way. And so, we need him to show up, we need him to give us direction, we need him to lead the way so that we can follow. But that means that we will often find ourselves waiting, these things don’t always come to us on our schedule, and so we have to wait for it.

I am reminded of the prophet Habakkuk who had received the word of the Lord, promising him,

"I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Habakkuk 1:5).

But he’s going to have to wait on it. Now, I don’t know about you, but I don’t really like to wait. No matter whether I am at the grocery store, at Walmart, in the drive through at the bank, or even waiting for the microwave there are times when I find that it can be incredibly frustrating. But I don’t think that it is just me, I believe there is a part of all of us that wants to get what we want, when we want it.

And so, seasons of waiting can weigh very heavily upon our souls. For some of you it might be waiting to get your grades, waiting to see if you get the job, waiting for the results of a medical test. And it is in that season of waiting, when you are stuck questioning the unknown, that it can become an unbearable weight. The weight of waiting can be overwhelming, it can suck the joy right out of us, and God knows how hard it is for us to wait. And so, in Psalm chapter 130 the Holy Spirit gives us four things to keep in mind as we endure a season of waiting because he wants to meet with us there.

And so, number one, when you find yourself in a season of waiting, when you are feeling burdened by the weight, just be honest and cry out to the Lord like the psalmist does in verse one.

“Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy” (Psalm 130:1-2).

Have you ever been in the depths, where you felt like you couldn’t go any lower, and it was there in that place that you cried out for mercy?

Believe it or not, crying out to God from the depths of failure, brokenness, and despair is part of an authentic walk with God; because following Jesus doesn’t mean that everything goes our way and bad things will never happen to us. In fact, our Savior who said, “Come follow me” also said,

"In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33).

And so, that is not a promise that we want to hang on the refrigerator or put on the mirror, but the truth is that following Jesus isn’t always easy.

You see, the promise of redemption, deliverance, and salvation is for another season, but in this world, you will have trouble. Your car may break down, your children may wander from the faith, the doctor may give you bad news, or your boss may treat you unfairly because you are a Christian.

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

But when we find ourselves in the depths, maybe in the depths of fear, the depths of failure, or the depths of a health crisis there is a tendency to feel alone and depressed about our circumstances. And that is when we need to cry out to God.

That is what the psalmist said, when you are struggling to persevere, anxious about your circumstances, wrestling with feelings of self-worth, as you are climbing the hill on the way to worship, they sang this song.

“Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy” (Psalm 130:1-2).

What do you do when you find that life is an uphill battle?

I want to encourage you to cry out to God no matter whether you are angry, disappointed, discouraged, or frustrated because he invites us to express our feelings to him. In fact, he already knows more about your situation or the circumstance you find yourself in then you do, and so you’re crying out to God is merely an expression of the honesty of your relationship. And when we cry out from the depths, we discover that God was with us all along, because the Bible tells us in Psalm chapter 139.

“If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psalm 139:8-10).

And that is such good news, because we are never alone, no matter where we are his hand will guide us, and his strength will support us.

Secondly, the Spirit of God wants you to be encouraged when you are feeling the weight of your circumstances, burdened by your situation, struggling under the weight of waiting, knowing that God is not keeping score, he is not punishing you, because the psalmist said,

“If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, therefore, you are feared” (Psalm 130:3-4).

In other words, with you there is forgiveness, therefore we can serve you with reverence, because you are not a God who keeps a record of sins.

That is important for us to understand, if you don’t get anything else, I want you to know that God is not watching from heaven, holding a clipboard in his hand, marking a scoreboard, making a list and checking it twice. For many of us that is hard to wrap our minds around, because we know our Bibles, we know that God is holy, and as Habakkuk said,

“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong” (Habakkuk 1:13).

And so, that is true, but it was his holiness that led him to redeem us, forgiving us, and the motivating factor behind all of that is God’s nature to love because,

“God is love” (1 John 4:8).

And this is what we see demonstrated in the life of Jesus, it’s demonstrated in the teachings of Jesus, and it’s demonstrated in the death of Jesus, because the Bible says that God demonstrates his love for us on the cross. And so, it was the death and resurrection of Jesus that shouted across the expanse of eternity that God is love.

Armed with that understanding that it is God’s nature to love and the clear teaching of Scripture that tells us that,

“Love keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

We are better able to understand and grasp the depth of his love and the power of his forgiveness.

In fact, if you are here today and you don’t know God’s forgiveness, or maybe you are unsure of God’s forgiveness, I want to encourage you with every bit of faith you can gather to receive God’s loving forgiveness. Call upon the name of the Lord, ask for his forgiveness because the Bible says,

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32).

Receive it by faith and wait on it, because that waiting is not passive, number three it is a waiting with anticipation, it is an active preparation for that moment in time when God shows up.

That’s what the psalmist said, he continued in verse five, praising God and saying,

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning” (Psalms 130:5-6).

The imagery here is that of a night watchman standing guard on the city walls protecting the inhabitants from enemies. And so, the watchmen were stationed on the wall so that they would be able to detect any approaching danger throughout the night.

The psalmist emphasizes the watchmen’s anticipation of the morning light and the end of their shift because with the coming of morning there is a sense of relief and safety. The psalmist said,

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, … more than watchmen wait for the morning” (Psalms 130:5-6).

And it is with this imagery that the Holy Spirit expresses the hope or the expectation that we who believe are to have in the Lord. The certainty of morning is comparable with the certainty of God’s deliverance and his mighty presence.

I know it sometimes feels like the storms of our lives are just happening in a random haphazard way but the Bible says that the Lord has placed parameters on his creation. He tells us by his Spirit through the psalmist,

“The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon. It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter” (Psalms 74:16-17).

In other words, the psalmist tells us that there is an appointed time, everything is on schedule, it will certainly come, it’s right on time, and so we don’t need to be worried as we are waiting.

This is the essence of waiting on God in prayer, we don’t need to be anxiously wondering if the darkness of the midnight hour that we are going through is ever going to end. And in the same way, as we are waiting for that answered prayer, we shouldn’t become frustrated but instead as the Scripture says,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

In other words, we can trust in the Lord because we know that he has a watch and there is an appointed time. Like the prophet Habakkuk said as he was waiting,

“I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me” (Habakkuk 2:1).

You see, the genuineness of our faith manifests itself in our prayers because it is an active participation. True prayer is not merely about presenting a list of requests to God but it is actively preparing and positioning ourselves to receive what we have asked for. It involves a genuine communication of love and dependence upon God while waiting for him to “speak” or “move” the heavens and the earth.

Our waiting in prayer puts us in a posture to receive his word, that bread from heaven, and it requires us to depend solely upon him because his word is a gift that comes in its own time. And so, we wait…

“Like watchmen wait for the morning” (Psalms 130:6).

Trusting that the sun will rise, that God will speak, and that God will show up in ways that will transform our hearts and give us understanding. But this “word” that we wait for is not something that we can force or that we can create ourselves, but as we wait for it, we open ourselves to greater insight, deeper growth, and fresh revelation from the Holy Spirit.

You see, we don’t know when, and we don’t need to know when, but we can have confidence because we know that there is a time. And so, we can wait patiently, trusting God and having hope in God, because we know that he has a schedule. In other words, he is in control, he has a when, because there is a time and a season for everything. Therefore, the psalmist said,

“Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption” (Psalms 130:7).

And so, we know our redemption is drawing near, we are waiting, but there is a sense of anticipation because we know that he is coming. From Genesis to Revelation God has given us a sneak peek, revealing glimpses of that which has been hidden, but which has now been revealed in these last times for our sake (1 Peter 1:20).

There has always been times and seasons of waiting, revelation coming in stages and phases through the word of God and through our experiences, but Jesus tells us in Luke’s gospel,

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).

For some of you here today, this is where you are living right now, you are waiting to see the faithfulness of God. You are wondering if your child will ever come back to the Lord? You are wondering when you are going to have the marriage that you want to have? Or maybe you are wondering, when is God going to heal me of these migraines? And you are waiting, and you are waiting, and the Spirit of God says,

“Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption” (Psalms 130:7).

And so, I want to encourage you to wait for it like the watchmen waits for the morning. You may not see it now, it may seem like it is taking forever, and you are beginning to wonder if it will ever happen. But I want to encourage you to hang on, hold onto your faith, continue to wait, because God’s delays are not God’s denials. Just because you haven’t seen it yet, that doesn’t mean that God is not going to do it, it’s coming but you are going to have to wait for it.

You see, our faith is not based on what we see or what we want…

“We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Our faith is based on the character and the goodness of our loving God. And so, even in the waiting I will lift my hands, because in my heart I have put my hope in the Lord. I may not see what I want to see, but I will choose to walk by faith, because of the faithfulness of God. And that’s why I can worship him like I do, that’s why I can praise him like I do, because even before I see him move, I know that God is still good, and he is still on his throne.

As we close, I want to encourage you to cry out to God, just be honest with him about what you’re feeling, because your redemption is drawing near. And so, when you feel the burden, when you feel the weight of waiting, continue to cry out to God because the psalmist said,

“Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Psalms 30:5).

The morning will certainly come, and so like the watchmen waits for the morning, let’s continue to pray, crying out to God, looking for him to show up in the depths of our struggles.

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