

Willingly Waiting: Waiting with Hope

Ephesians 1:15-23

In Michigan we call it the Secretary of States office, but in Virginia, where I grew up, we called it the DMV. The department of Motor Vehicles. If there's one place I associate with waiting, it's the DMV. It's not like I went there that often as a child, but whenever I ended up there, it was sure to be a long wait. No offense to anyone here who has worked at the Secretary of State or the DMV before, but there's a reason the 2016 animated film Zootopia chose a sloth as the DMV employee.

We all tend to associate waiting with a negative experience, but the reality is that much of life is spent waiting and at times waiting in anticipation can be a joyful experience. We wait for the birth of a child, for a vacation, or to move into a new house. Waiting can be a positive or negative experience and much of that depends on what we are waiting for and the way we wait.

This Sunday marks the first Sunday of Advent and for many people "advent" just means a countdown to Christmas. You can purchase an "advent" Lego calendar to help you mark the days with a new Lego toy as you wait. But the term Advent comes from the Latin word Adventus which means "coming" or "arrival". During this season we "wait" and focus our attention on the arrival of Jesus to earth at his first coming as a baby and we also live now waiting on the arrival of Jesus back to earth as the ruling and reigning king at his second coming.

So, this is a season of waiting and it points to the waiting that we do all our lives. We wait for Christ to return. But we don't want our waiting to be like waiting at the DMV and so this means we must wait in a certain way. Traditionally the Sundays of Advent have been marked by 4 themes that teach us how to wait Christ's arrival. This year to celebrate Advent we are going to take up these themes each Sunday and learn how to wait.

The first theme we will take up is how to wait with hope. People know the importance of hope in our world today. It's very common to hear someone say something like, "never lose hope." Maybe you've seen one of those motivational

posters that says, “Once you choose hope, anything’s possible.” But often hope is more of a vague feeling that things will get better or that life will turn out positive for me. Biblical hope is not vague. It’s specific and fixed on the future and you can live with a settled confidence that is based on God’s promises. So, I want to help you understand hope and learn to wait with hope this morning. To do that we will be in Ephesians 1, and we will see **3 Ways to Wait with Hope**.

1. Recognize What You’ve Been Called To

In this passage hope is directly tied to our calling. Look at the language here in verse 18. But to understand this we need to back up a couple of verses. Let’s move to verses 15-16. So, Paul is going to pray for the church at Ephesus according to verse 16 and he’s going to do that because he’s heard of their faith in Jesus and their love for other believers. He’s thankful for them and going to pray for them. But what does he pray? What specific requests?

Look at verse 17 and the beginning of verse 18. You see all this language of wisdom, revelation, knowledge and having your heart enlightened. Paul wants them to grow in their grasp of several truths. He wants them to “know” some things. This sort of knowledge isn’t the kind of knowledge you get from reading a newspaper or a Wikipedia page. It’s not simple facts. It’s knowledge that gets into your bones and changes your heart. It’s knowledge that fundamentally alters the way you see everything. So, what does Paul pray that these believers would know? 3 requests and they all begin with the word “what”. Look at verses 18-19.

“What is the hope of your calling”

“What are the riches of his glorious inheritance”

What is the immeasurable greatness of His power”

Paul wants them to know hope, the riches they now have in Christ, and the greatness of God’s power toward them. We are going to spend our time with the first request here, that believers would know the hope of our calling. Hope is tied to our calling. So, before we can understand hope and wait in hope, we need to grasp our calling. What is a calling?

To be called to something is to receive an invitation to a special privilege or responsibility. Think about that. A calling is an invitation. It's not something that originates inside you. Someone else invites you to this privilege. It's like receiving a summons from the President to serve on a vital committee. In Scripture a calling is always by divine invitation. So, God Himself invites us to a special privilege. What is that privilege? To answer that let's look back up in Ephesians 1 to verses 3-5.

What are we called to? What is the special invitation? It's to join God's family. It's adoption. So often when we think of salvation it can become a sort of simple transaction or exchange, but at the most basic level you have been adopted into God's very own family. Listen to John 1:12-13. Listen to how J.I. Packer put this:

"Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater." J.I. Packer

This is the calling we have and our hope is tied to this calling. Because we are a part of God's family, we can now wait in hope. So, it's vital we recognize what we've been called to, but it's also important we remember what we've been called from.

2. Remember What You've Been Called From

For each believer here there is a firm hope that comes with your calling. But before you were adopted into God's family, you had no hope. Listen to Ephesians 2:12. You were without hope at that time. But what time is that? The time Paul is referring to is explained in Ephesians 2:1-3. Notice the language of verse 3. You were children of wrath. In other words, you were in a different family, and this family put you under the wrath and judgment of God because of your sin and this meant you had no hope.

You and I had no hope because we were dead in our trespasses and sins. In other words, we were completely under the control of sin, and this means we were in a

state of spiritual death. Notice in verse 1 that you can be spiritually dead and yet still walking. However, dead people don't have a lot of hope.

It's important for us to remember the transfer from one family to another which is why Paul uses this word "remember" in verse 12. Remembering what we've been adopted out of or called from helps us to fix our hope where it needs to be.

3. Resolve to Fix Your Hope

What do we fix our hope on? Well, in our culture there are lots of options for us to hope in. There are many things that promise us the peace and rest that hope brings into our lives, but they can never fully deliver it. I would call these illusions of hope. So many people today put their hope in technology and human progress. They imagine that our Silicon Valley overlords will be able to manufacture a better and more lasting future for humanity by developing the latest and greatest technology. We will live longer and healthier lives and have to work less and enjoy more leisure time. This is just an illusion of hope.

Many people attempt to fix their hope on stability and comfort. If I can just get my financial house in order I can have hope for the future. If I can just exercise and eat right I can be confident in my health. Others find hope in political leaders and movements. There are so many illusions that call us to fix our hope on them. So, what do we fix our hope on?

Two things that go together. First, look at Ephesians 2:13. You had no hope but now you are in Christ Jesus. Now look back up at 2:3 where it says we were children of wrath and then let's read into verses 4-7. The first place we fix our hope is on Jesus Christ. We are only adopted because we are united to Him. We join God's family because of what Jesus has done for us in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. To truly live in hope, we must live with our eyes fixed on Him.

But as we set our eyes on Christ, and as we consider our adoption, it leads us to hope in a specific moment in the future. In the Roman empire, when you were adopted into a family, you immediately became an heir of that families wealth. In other words, you gained access to the inheritance of the family. You may have

been born a slave and grown up as an orphan. But the moment you were officially adopted into the family of a Roman citizen, you now had the reality of that inheritance waiting for you in the future. With this in mind, listen to Ephesians 1:11-14. "Until we acquire possession of it". In other words, our hope is focused on the future. We have hope now because we have Christ. But we wait for a specific moment in the future when we will gain full access to our inheritance as a part of God's family.

And what is that moment? *"More profoundly, however, hope must be centered not on the possibility of improvement, or on progress, or even on grace, but on God, the reality of the coming kingdom, and the new life in Christ, only partially available to us now. God and the inevitable triumph of his purposes for the universe are our ultimate hope; that the opposition to God, and the disorder so evident now, will yield to the peaceable kingdom; and that, as the Gospel and Epistles of John emphasize so well, this new life in Christ is something that begins in us now."* Daniel Westberg

Hope is renewed every day as I ponder the fact that because of Christ I am going to enter God's eternal kingdom and all will be made right. Justice will be done. Peace will come. Sin will be eradicated forever, and I will receive the inheritance of those adopted into God's family. This is going to happen to me and for me.

But here's where hope comes in. This is not here today. We wait for it. The best way I can describe this waiting process is something like when you are going on vacation and you are excited about it. You anticipate and look forward to it and begin to build into your schedule time to plan and pack. And when you have a free moment your mind drifts to the time when you will be sitting on the beach, enjoying the sun. Waiting with hope means waiting with joy. Waiting with hope means knowing my calling and what my calling means for my future. I'll leave you with my favorite definition of hope.

Hope is a construal of one's future as holding good prospects...In hoping, a person delights in the future, welcomes it with enthusiasm, tastes it with the pleasure of anticipation, because he sees excellent prospects of having what he wants." - Robert C. Roberts

Sermon Reflection Questions – 11/30/25

- What's one place you associate with waiting?
- Do you normally think of waiting as a negative or positive experience?
- What are some Advent traditions you have as a family?
- How would you describe the common understanding of hope in our culture?
- How would you define "calling" in Ephesians 1:18?
- What are the three requests that Paul prays for in Ephesians 1:18-19?
- Why is adoption into God's family such a big deal?
- What are some practical ways you can live out your adoption into God's family more and more?
- How would you describe what we have been called from?
- What are some false hopes that people have in our culture? What false hopes are you most tempted by?

- What moment in the future is biblical hope fixed on?
- Why does hope always include joy?