

**TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP****JOIN A SERVE TEAM****NEW HERE?****CONNECTION CARD****STAY UP TO DATE****SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN****Series: How Long? Waiting on God with Honesty and Hope****Title: How Do We Live in the Waiting?****Text: Acts 1:6-11; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 22**

It doesn't take long to realize something is not right in our world. Turn on the news for five minutes and you see wars and conflicts, political division, disease and suffering, natural disasters, and anxiety and fear are rising everywhere. There's a growing sense, even among people who aren't deeply spiritual, that something is off. That the world is not as it should be. And for followers of Jesus, that feeling produces a deep longing: "Come, Lord Jesus."

We live in a world waiting for something, but two questions arise:

1. What are we waiting for?
2. How do we live in the waiting?

We live in this gap between what currently is and what will someday be in the future. This waiting gap is filled with tension, and from the very beginning, the church has lived in this tension. The Scripture testifies that Jesus came. Jesus died. Jesus rose again. Jesus ascended. And Jesus will return someday.

**What are we waiting for? (Acts 1:6-11)**

- People are asking questions, "Is this the end?" "Are these the signs?" "How long until Jesus returns?" These questions have been asked since Jesus resurrected. In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask Jesus a similar question, "*Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?*" Essentially, the disciples were asking, "How long...?"
- Jesus doesn't give them a timeline, but instead says, "*The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.*" Jesus redirects their focus from when he will return to how they should live in the gap of time between what is and what will be.
- In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples to wait until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- After his ascension, two angels appeared and told the disciples, "*...someday he [Jesus] will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go.*" Jesus promised his followers the power of the Holy Spirit, and the angels promised that Jesus would return someday.

The expectant hope of the church is that there will come a time, which might be at any time, when the world is renewed. History is going somewhere under God's guidance, and where it is going is God's new creation of justice, healing, and hope. Jesus himself will appear and be personally present (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). He will be the agent and model of transformation that will happen to the whole world and to believers (1 John 2:28-3:2). Believers will experience the resurrection of their bodies (1 Corinthians 15:23, 35-58). Christ will judge everyone (2 Corinthians 5:10), and believers will be with God forever in the new creation (Revelation 21).

Many have tried to determine the exact historical events that triggered the return of Christ, but that was never the focus of Jesus or the apostles. They were focused on how we live while we wait for Jesus to return.

## How do we live in the waiting? (Titus 2:11-14)

1. We are saved by grace and shaped by grace.
  - Paul anchors everything in grace. Grace appeared when Jesus came to the earth.
  - Grace not only saves us, but it shapes us. In Titus 2:12, grace instructs us. Like a mentor or teacher, God's grace forms us, trains us. Waiting is formative because God is at work through his grace to train us.
2. We say "no" in the waiting.
  - In verse 12, grace trains us to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. There are things in this world that pull us away from the life that God has for us. Grace helps us say no.
  - Waiting involves resisting what is contrary to God's way. As we wait for the future, we are formed in the present by what we say "no" to.
3. We say "yes" in the waiting.
  - Paul says we should live with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God.
  - Living with wisdom means being self-controlled, leading yourself to be inwardly formed as you follow the way of Jesus.
  - Living righteously means being outwardly aligned in your behavior toward others to God's standards.
  - Living with devotion to God means you are upwardly focused in your reverence and pursuit of God's ways as revealed in Jesus.
4. We look forward in hope.
  - The expectation is for that wonderful day when our hope becomes a reality when Christ returns.
  - Our hope is not that the world will get better, or life will be easier, or that circumstances will improve. Our hope is a person, and that he will return to make all things new and right.
5. We remember what Jesus has done.
  - Paul reminds us that Jesus gave himself to redeem us, to purify us, to make us his own. Our hope for his return is rooted in the past work of the cross.
  - As a result, we are eager to do good works. We're not just sitting around waiting for Christ to return. Instead, we are actively living out his mission in the world, representing and building his kingdom now as we wait for his return.

At the very end of the Bible, Revelation 22:7, 12, 20 records the words of Jesus three times, saying, "I am coming soon." Revelation 22:20 records the church's response to Jesus' soon-coming to pray within the tension of the gap we live in: "Come, Lord Jesus."

Waiting is difficult and normal, but waiting is not passive. We wait for Jesus to return, and expect him to return to make all things right and new. Until that day, we live ready. We live holy, and we live hopeful.