

Waiting

January 1, 2023

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Good morning everyone, and happy New Year. We are waiting at the edge of a new year, unaware of what lies ahead for us. Yet also continuing in what God is been doing in and through us. We're waiting to see how things will unfold. And it's hard to wait. We live in a culture of instant gratification. That is our reality. God made us in a way that responds to these dopamine jumps and we go from dopamine hit to dopamine hit to dopamine hit, in this fast food, TicTok culture. And God doesn't make mistakes, but we have to learn to wait better and be more patient with things and we have to think outside of ourselves and our circumstances because we don't want to really wait for anything we want in our lives.

It's hard to wait. Pastor Tom's Christmas series on waiting, has helped us see how each person in the events of Jesus' birth had challenges to wait for and today, we finish with two people they get a small mention, who were also waiting. However, they were waiting for something much larger than themselves and their circumstances.

And as we're walking through this passage together, we'll see that our perspective must change as we increase our faith, and as we do, it will change how we live out this year ahead. So go ahead and turn to Luke chapter 2. And as you're doing that, I was trying to recall a time of waiting in my life and there have been many times of waiting but one time in particular really shifted with a perspective change.

The year after I graduated high school and moved to Edmonton, I was meeting a ton of new people at university. I made it my goal to introduce myself to two new people every day of the first semester and that was continuing through the year. So I was meeting a ton of new people and I started coming to SVBC and meeting people here.

I was part of the young adults group and there was one girl in particular in the young adults group that just really caught my heart. She was beautiful she was hilarious. She was deeply empathetic, and she loved Jesus as much as I did. I was really attracted to her.

We would hang out at young adults events a lot. Months later, there was a moment where I realized that she liked me back and I realized I had to ask her out. So I planned this whole elaborate, trying to be romantic, scavenger hunt, where at the end, I would ask her out. I planned this out with my mom and my sister and got their help on it. I invited her over, and she followed through this scavenger hunt that I had planned. At the end of it, I took her hand, I looked her in the eyes, and I said I don't know if you're the girl that got has for my life, or even if you want to be, but I would be so honored to explore what God might have for us together. Maybe you had to be there, but it was really romantic, and maybe a little over the top.

And she said, no. And I was shocked, because I knew she liked me and I liked her. Rejection is hard. Then she said the reason was, that she had started reading this book. Not this book was all about taking six months of your life, and not dating anyone, and committing to giving that time to the Lord. The aim was to use that time for him to shape you to become the kind of woman that will attract the right kind of guy for your life, a guy that that will be honoring to the Lord. And

so one of the things that I was so attracted to in this girl was that she loved Jesus so much and here she was putting her relationship with Jesus ahead of her romantic interests -and that just made me like her even more! But she had just started reading this book, and had just started the six months.

So I had to decide: Am I going to wait for six months? Now as an adult. I understand that six months goes by like that, and anybody can do anything for six months. But as a young adult that was a big deal like six months felt like forever. A lot happens in six months, right? So in context, six months felt like a long time. I was meeting a ton of new people and I wondered if this was God trying to tell me no. I was meeting a ton of new people, and was this person worth waiting for? Is it even healthy to wait around for someone after they have told you

no? Would I tell a friend that they should wait or would I tell them to just move on and see what God has in store?

So then I called my mom and let her know what had happened and how I didn't know what to do. And she gave me a shift in perspective in a handful of words when she asked: "Is she worth waiting for?" "Oh of course! She's amazing, beautiful, and incredible." "Mom said "Well, then..." It was then that my perspective shifted.

Because while it felt long and difficult, I had to have this shift in perspective that came by understanding the value and the beauty of what I was waiting for. And then I had focus, faith, and resolve to wait. And this is what our passage is speaks about today. But as for the rest of the story, I did end up waiting 6 months for her to finish this commitment to ask her out again, and she said no again. It's a long story, but I was persistent and she eventually said yes, and now we're married, and it's awesome. But now, let's read in Luke chapter 2 starting in verse 22. 22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant[e] depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37

and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.[f] She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So Joseph and Mary were bringing Jesus to the temple and this was for his circumcision as well as a purification for Mary and Joseph according to the law of Moses. And there was this older man Simeon, a faithful and righteous man, who was not a priest of the temple or a pharisee, but seems to be a faithful Jew, just like them. But he's there because the Holy Spirit prompted him to be there. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that before he would die he would see the Christ, the salvation of Israel. When he lays eyes on Jesus as little baby, he's made aware that this was the Christ and he blesses the baby and says, "Lord, now you are letting your servant[e] depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Incredible. We see that he's been waiting for this moment, and that he could not see death before this event happens, and now he's at peace. And what he says here, is incredibly significant for two reasons: One, because he is identifying Jesus as the Christ, the salvation of Israel. It says he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. This was a big thing. There are Jewish people today who are still waiting for this confirmation that God's savior has come.

Second he references salvation coming to the Gentiles. Gentiles are anybody who's not a Jew. Then this foreshadowing is a big deal. Gentiles were unclean and had to be kept separate from the Jews. So for him to say: for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Was foreshadowing the magnitude of what Christ was going to accomplish.

This salvation is coming to all people. Salvation has come for everyone. This was way ahead of what the Jews expected. But this salvation was what all the Jews have been waiting for since The Fall; since Genesis chapter 3. This was huge, and beyond just simply restoring Israel to a former glory. This would fix the greatest problem that humans have ever faced. And at this same meeting, we see this woman named Anna. Anna is a priestess, probably married when she was young, and widowed after seven years of marriage. Now at the age of 84, we're told that she was at the temple night and day. Faithfully praying, worshiping, and fasting. It says that she was also there, and she began to proclaim this news of the Christ to the Jews. Who had also been faithfully waiting for God to redeem Israel. So even though Simeon and Anna just were too random Jewish people who were faithful. God had given them this incredibly important role.

God had made them forerunners to Christ. And this is not a small thing. John the Baptist was a forerunner for Christ. And in Matthew 11:11 it says that John the Baptist was the

greatest man to ever live before Jesus because of his important role that he had. Simeon and Anna had a similar role, and they waited for God to fulfill his promise - and it took a long time: From The Fall of Man to this point. And for them, they had waited much of their lifetime to see

this event. I mean for me, I get frustrated when a web page doesn't load fast enough for a video has to buffer!

Think about the things for you right now that God has you waiting for in your life. Consider the challenges and hardships that you are enduring. Consider your circumstances that God is holding you through. Think about the hopes and dreams that you have for yourself and those you love. We are waiting. Waiting to see how it will unfold, and how God will reveal himself through those circumstances.

Most of these things feel small compared to the history altering coming of the messiah, but God still cares about all of those small things. And because we want instant results, waiting is hard. So what can we learn here about getting better at waiting? Well, in the story of these two individuals, we can see that in their waiting, they remained vigilantly faithful. Their faithfulness is noted by their devotion to being a part of what God was doing around them. We see them worshiping God. Living righteously – living in a way that honors God. And they were seeking God and listening to him in prayer. Worshiping God – honoring Him with their hearts and lives. They waited faithfully. Trusting that the bigger picture of God's promises would come to fruition.

When we wait faithfully, it increases our faith and we are devoted and open to understanding God more and our perspective changes to align with His perspective. We see a bigger picture as our heart aligns with his heart, and then we have focus and intention and hope for God's promises and that will change how we move forward in this year ahead.

You must remember though, that it is so easy to get caught up and frustrated with the things that you're waiting for because you want that instant gratification in your life. But Simeon and Anna were waiting for something much larger than themselves. They had God's perspective. They were waiting for the Christ to come. But remember, we are also waiting for Christ to return!! Too often we just set this idea on our mental shelf, but we cannot forget about Christ coming again. We must live in light of that, we must live faithfully and righteously, and we must share that with the world! People's lives are at stake! People are hurting around us, they're broken they have questions and they find the internet answers lacking. As those who are forgiven in Christ, we like Anna must proclaim hope to the world. When we remember the bigger picture, it moves us to be active in living out our faith. If we are faithfully waiting on the bigger picture in scripture, it changes how we live our day to day lives. God doesn't just magically make all of our troubles go away. Rather he gives us patience and understanding. He brings deep joy and hope in the midst of the most terrible circumstances. He shifts our expectations to align with his, so that we can have perspective on what is most important. When we have a larger perspective, God's perspective, we experience hope and peace in our lives through every situation that God asks us to wait him in.

Let's pray.