

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Receive Grace Through Silent Waiting”
(Part IV of “Awakened to Grace”)
June 14, 2026

Scripture

Psalm 27:14
Mark 1:35-39

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (05/24/2026) Grace saves us from the guilt and power of sin
- (05/31/2026) When we pray, we 1) receive God’s grace and 2) invite God to intervene.
- (06/07/2026) Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (The Holy Spirit) to penetrate our hearts with the wisdom of Jesus to create space for God’s grace.

Core theological idea: We can receive grace through silent waiting.

Challenge/purpose: To teach and encourage people to practice silent waiting.

The Sermon

Ever since I’ve been married, I’ve discovered the power of silent waiting. When my mouthwash runs out, I place the empty container next to the bathroom sink and silently wait. Within a few days, a full bottle of mouthwash magically appears. When my bottle of vitamins runs out, I place the empty bottle next to the bathroom sink and silently wait. A day or two later – POOF! - a full bottle magically appears. In the kitchen, I place an empty bottle of ketchup on the counter and silently wait. The next day – POOF! – a full bottle magically appears!! Of course, it’s not magic. I have an awesome wife who does most of the shopping, for which I am greatly thankful.

According to Mark 1:35-37, Jesus, our Savior & Lord, got up, “...very early in the morning, while it was still dark, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” This is Jesus practicing an old Jewish tradition by silently waiting for his Father. As stated in Psalm 27:14, “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”

Why would we do this? Why would we silently wait for God? We would do so because we receive grace through silent waiting. Let’s analyze this a bit more closely.

By ‘silent’ I mean finding a quiet place where it’s just you and God. It could be a closet, private office, a nature trail, the beach at sunrise, or any place where it is

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just you and God. While spending time in this quiet place, you listen for God’s voice.

By ‘waiting’ I mean expecting God to speak or act. Whenever we wait, we expect something to happen. When we wait in line at the grocery store, we expect to buy food in the near future. When we wait at the Social Security office, we expect to learn about our benefits in the far future. Well, when we wait for God, we expect God to either speak or act at the right moment. In Mark 1, Jesus silently waited on the Father until the Father told him to go and preach the good news throughout Galilee.

So, when we silently wait, we go to a quiet place, listening for God’s voice and expecting God to either speak or act. This is one way to receive God’s grace, which is the unconditional love of God that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit.

One way to practice silent waiting is Lectio Divina. This is an old Christian practice designed to help us hear God’s voice through the Written Word of God. It relies less on intellectual analysis of the Bible passage and more on how the passage makes us feel and respond. Here are the steps:

- 1) Slowly read Bible passage 3x (Perhaps read it out loud)
- 2) Meditate on the verse(s) that stand out to you
 - Notice your reaction to the verse(s)
 - Notice the feelings aroused by the verse(s)
 - Notice the mental images produced by the verse(s)
- 3) Pray about what God may be telling you.
- 4) Contemplate this throughout the day

Let’s practice this using Luke 1:46-56. This is what the Virgin Mary prayed when she visited her cousin Elizabeth and found out that the baby in her cousin’s womb leaped for joy when she and the unborn Jesus approached.

First, we read it slowly 3 times. Sit back, close your eyes and calmly listen as I read this passage 3 times.

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,

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for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned
home.

Now, sit back and reflect on the verse(s) that stood out to you. What is your reaction to this verse(s). How does it make you feel? What images come to your mind?

(wait a minute)

Go ahead and pray. Is God telling you something or calling you to do something through this verse(s)? Be sure to contemplate this throughout the day.

(wait a minute)

Go ahead, open your eyes. As you can see, Lectio Divina is a great way to practice silent waiting. If you do this on a regular basis, whether it's once a week, bi-weekly or monthly, you will hear God's voice.

When we practice silent waiting, we do two things. The first thing we do when we practice silent waiting is listen for God's voice. We've already discussed this. It is what Lectio Divina is all about. The second thing we do is let go of control and give control over to God. We are saying, “Lord, we trust you enough to give up control by surrendering to your loving authority”.

We like being in control and hold on to it as much as we can. Of course, holding on to control is an illusion. The only thing we really control is how we react to whatever is happening around us. The decisions we make, and our responses are the only things we control.

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We must learn to give up our illusion of control. When things happen that we don't agree with, we must learn to hand it over to God and respond with love.

So, let's do a mental/spiritual exercise that will help us to let go of control by surrendering to the loving authority of God. Close your eyes and picture whatever it is you try to control. Hold out your hand and make a fist, as a physical and symbolic act of holding on to control. While holding out your closed fist, say the serenity prayer. Repeat after me: God, give us grace to accept the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the Wisdom to know the difference. Amen. Now, open your fist as a physical act of releasing your control.

We receive grace through silent waiting. As we practice silent waiting, we will hear God's voice, and trust God enough to let go of our illusion of control. We all need to practice silent waiting.

Let's pray.

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Outline

- I. Ever since I’ve been married, I’ve discovered the power of silent waiting.
 - A. When my mouthwash runs out, I place the empty container next to the bathroom sink and silently wait.
 - Within a few days, a full bottle of mouthwash magically appears.
 - B. When my bottle of vitamins runs out, I place the empty bottle next to the bathroom sink and silently wait.
 - A day or two later – POOF! - a full bottle magically appears.
 - C. In the kitchen, I place an empty bottle of ketchup on the counter and silently wait.
 - The next day – POOF! – a full bottle magically appears!!
 - D. Of course, it’s not magic. I have an awesome wife who does most of the shopping, for which I am greatly thankful.
- II. According to Mark 1:35-37, Jesus, our Savior & Lord, got up, “...very early in the morning, while it was still dark, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”
 - A. This is Jesus practicing an old Jewish tradition by silently waiting for his Father.
 - B. As stated in Psalm 27:14, “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”
- III. Why would we do this? Why would we silently wait for God?
 - A. We would do so because we receive grace through silent waiting.
 - B. Let’s analyze this a bit more closely.
 - C. By ‘silent’ I mean finding a quiet place where it’s just you and God.
 - It could be a closet, private office, a nature trail, the beach at sunrise, or any place where it is just you and God.
 - While spending time in this quiet place, you listen for God’s voice.
 - D. By ‘waiting’ I mean expecting God to speak or act.

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- Whenever we wait, we expect something to happen.
 - When we wait in line at the grocery store, we expect to buy food in the near future.
 - When we wait at the Social Security office, we expect to learn about our benefits in the far future.
 - Well, when we wait for God, we expect God to either speak or act at the right moment.
- In Mark 1, Jesus silently waited on the Father until the Father told him to go and preach the good news throughout Galilee.

E. So, when we silently wait, we go to a quiet place to listen for God’s voice and expect God to either speak or act.

- This is one way to receive God’s grace, which is the unconditional love of God that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit.

IV. One way to practice silent waiting is Lectio Divina.

A. This is an old Christian practice designed to help us hear God’s voice through the Written Word of God.

- It relies less on intellectual analysis of the Bible passage and more on how the passage makes us feel and respond.

B. Here are the steps:

- 1) Slowly read Bible passage 3x (Perhaps read it out loud)
- 2) Meditate on the verse(s) that stand out to you
 - Notice your reaction to the verse(s)
 - Notice the feelings aroused by the verse(s)
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- 3) Pray about what God may be telling you.
- 4) Contemplate this throughout the day

C. Let’s practice this using Luke 1:46-56.

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- This is what the Virgin Mary prayed when she visited her cousin Elizabeth and found out that the baby in her cousin’s womb leaped for joy when she and the unborn Jesus approached.
- First, we read it slowly 3 times. Sit back, close your eyes and calmly listen as I read this passage 3 times.

And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful

to Abraham and his descendants forever,

just as he promised our ancestors.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

- Now, sit back and reflect on the verse(s) that stood out to you.
 - What is your reaction to this verse(s).

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- How does it make you feel?
 - What images come to your mind?
 - wait a minute or two
 - Go ahead and pray.
 - Is God telling you something or calling you to do something through this verse(s)?
 - Be sure to contemplate this throughout the day.
 - wait a minute or two
 - Go ahead, open your eyes.
- D. As you can see, Lectio Divina is a great way to practice silent waiting.
- If you do this on a regular basis, whether it’s once a week, bi-weekly or monthly, you will hear God’s voice.
- V. When we practice silent waiting, we do two things.
- A. The first thing we do when we practice silent waiting is listen for God’s voice, which is what Lectio Divina is all about.
- B. The second thing we do is let go of control and give control over to God.
- We are saying, “Lord, we trust you enough to give up control by surrendering to your loving authority”.
- VI. Giving up control by surrendering to the loving authority of God
- A. We like being in control and hold on to it as much as we can.
- Of course, holding on to control is an illusion.
 - The only thing we really control is how we react to whatever is happening around us.
 - The decisions we make, and our responses are the only things we control.
- B. So, we must learn to give up our illusion of control.
- When things happen that we don’t agree with, we must learn to hand it over to God and respond with love.

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C. So, let’s do a mental/spiritual exercise that will help us to let go of control by surrendering to the loving authority of God.

- Close your eyes and picture whatever it is you try to control.
- Hold out your hand and make a fist, as a physical and symbolic act of holding on to control.
- While holding out your closed fist, say the serenity prayer. Repeat after me.
 - God, give us grace
 - to accept the things that cannot be changed,
 - courage to change the things that should be changed,
 - and the Wisdom to know the difference. Amen.
- Now, open your fist as a physical act of releasing your control.

VII. We receive grace through silent waiting.

- A. As we practice silent waiting, we will hear God’s voice, and let go of our illusion of control by surrendering to God’s loving authority.
- B. We should all practice silent waiting.