

The Waiting Room
Saturday, April 20, 2023

Questions:

What comes to mind when you hear the word wait?
What are you waiting for in your life right now?

When was the last time you sat in a waiting room? Waiting rooms can be scary places, they are where we wait for test results, or get in to see the doctor.

In life, we never go from promise room to promise room. We often go from the waiting room to the promise and fulfillment room and then back to the waiting room.

Do you love it?

Please allow me to show you around my waiting room.

When I was young, things moved along at a pretty fast clip. I graduated from high school, then off to college, graduated in 4 years and went off to a discipleship school in Spokane, WA. At that time, I felt like I could kind of steer my own ship. If I wanted something, or wanted to do something, I just did it. No sweat.

Then something strange happened. Things didn't go according to plan, and my timeline got all disrupted.

At 24, I was on a path to getting engaged. Then it all fell apart. The man I was in love with had secrets and didn't think it was a good idea to get married. My heart was shattered, my timeline was shattered and I was so disoriented. Nothing was working. My dream of getting married and having kids got pushed farther and farther from me.

At 27, I moved to Canada to help a church there open a discipleship school. I poured my whole life into that program. And I waited...and waited and waited.

While I certainly had lots of meaningful work, the biggest dream of my heart, to be married was still in the bottom of the deep freezer.

Then at 33, something incredible happened...a man named Shawn Harvey burst into my life. I was so scared because of all the things that had happened before. I was scared that he would run from me once he saw how broken up my heart was. This is what he said: nothing about you takes away anything from who I am. Marry that guy!

And I think this is when a pattern emerged in my life. We call it wait..wait...wait...run!!

Because we were not even engaged a week when my dad called to tell me that my mom was in the hospital. Within days after that, we found out that my mom had terminal cancer and she had two days, two weeks, two months to live.

While we tried to wrap our minds around that news, we decided to move our wedding from August of that year, to a mere 6 weeks away in April. We didn't even have time to send invitations, we just called people and told them when and where it was. I am happy to report that we just celebrated 19 years of marriage, so even with our rocky start, things turned out really well.

The next year my mom passed away and grief came in like a storm. Waiting for grief to pass is another form of waiting.

Within a year, we decided we wanted to try and have kids. In short order, it seemed pretty clear that this would not be an easy process either. We did tests, we had surgeries (both of us), we did all sorts of crazy things to try and get pregnant. Nothing.

We decided to open all the doors we could, so we pursued both adoption and fertility treatments. I will not fill in all the details, but you can imagine the rollercoaster when I say, 6 years later...72 months later, we received our first miracle, Emma.

Her birthmom was a young woman in our church who knew she was not ready to be a mom. She had heard our story and God told her to trust Him, and give her baby to us.

Those were beautiful days.

Remember our pattern...wait, wait, wait, RUN! Well, I wasn't getting any younger, so we decided to keep pursuing pregnancy. And sure enough, 16 months later, we welcomed our second miracle, Alina Joy. My heart was so full.

Because we did IVF, we had a few embryos left and we knew we needed to give them a chance for life. However, the stats were not good. They told us that there was a 5% chance of getting pregnant with one and a less than 2% chance of getting pregnant with two. Well...17 months after Alina was born, we welcomed twin boys into our family.

So, if you are doing the math, I had four babies under 3 within 2.5 years. So, if I looked a little tired and worn out, now you know why.

There are so many stories to tell about these seasons, and there were more waiting rooms to come, but I want to stop there and talk about waiting.

Specifically, waiting well.

Turn in your Bibles to Matt 11:1-15

How do we trust God when good things, even God things seem trapped in the supply chain and nothing seems to be working?

When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”

Jesus told them, “Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen— the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” And he added, “God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.”

As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way before you.’

“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is! And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it. For before John came, all the prophets and the law of Moses looked forward to this present time. And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

Pray

So, our hero, John, the one who declared in John 1:29, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

John goes on to be the first to recognize and publicly affirm Jesus to be the Messiah.

What changed?

Look at Matthew 14: 1-5

At that time King Herod heard much about Jesus. He said to his helpers, “This must be John the Baptist. He has risen from the dead. That is why these powerful works are done by him.” For Herod had taken John and put him in prison. It was because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. For John had said to him, “It is against the Law for you to have her.” He would have

killed John but he was afraid of the people. The people thought John was one who spoke for God.

John wasn't in prison for doing something wrong, he was there because he obeyed God.

The outrage! It's not fair! We cry...

Welcome to the waiting room.

The waiting room is where our expectations and Gods reality collide.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Why does it take so long?

What have I done to deserve this?

Are you actually who you say you are?

The waiting room is where our pithy, shallow beliefs about God get thrown into the deep end and find out if they can swim.

Where is God when every, single thing I touch is falling apart?

Where is God when the very things I thought He told me to do are causing so much pain and rejection in my life?

Where is God when I am waiting, waiting, waiting for the next season to come? For healing? For answers? For peace?

For the night to finally end and the morning breaks open with all of its clarity and beauty?

What is happening in the waiting?

What are we waiting for?

Let's look at John in Matthew 11:1-2

John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"

John's prison was his waiting room. What do we hear in his questions? They are likely the same questions we ask in our waiting rooms:

There is a wifi commercial at home with this old guy who walks through the house...end says "wifi acting up?"

This is what comes to mind when I think of these battles we face in the waiting room, like new characters in our story, they come in and wreak havoc like unwelcome house guests.

1. Disillusionment – how did John go from being God's messenger about Jesus to asking, "are you the one, or should we look for someone else?"

- a. Let's not be too hard on John. Haven't we all been there? I am doing all the "right things," my heart is set on you, but you are not who I thought you would be.
 - b. Have you ever said, "this was certainly not the way I thought things would happen"
 - c. **One commentary described John and his disciples like this: "Along with John they were becoming increasingly alarmed as to the future of the messianic program."**
 - d. Umm...I have a few questions.
 - e. Disillusionment: a feeling of disappointment resulting from the discovery that something is not as good as one believed it to be.
 - f. Ahhh. Guilty.
 - g. We have so many hopes/dreams/expectations. Sometimes things work out, but I am going to say MOST of the time things don't turn out the way you imagine it.
 - h. One example – (I am maybe going to step on toes here) If we ask what God's will is for our life – what is our answer? If the answer is to fulfill a destiny or live a good life, we might go through some disillusionment at some point.
 - i. I was a teenager in the "world changer" era, World changers shouldn't have to go through years of hiddenness and heartache- we have work to do!
 - j. The Westminster catechism states, "The chief aim of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."
 - k. In John 16:33 Jesus said, I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."
 - l. I am not trying to make anyone mad or say that we should pursue suffering, but we do need to include pain into our theology or we will likely get disillusioned in our faith and we may be tempted to give up.
 - m. Setbacks and heartache can become an invitation to know God more if we will allow God into the pain, and let Him carry it with us.
 - n. When we are disillusioned, we can ask the question that John asks, "Are you really God? Why would I be here if you were really God?"
 - o. Listen to Jesus reply:
 - p. Matt. 11:4-5 Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." And he added, "God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.
 - q. Just a few verses later vs. 11, Jesus says that no one who ever lived was as great as John. Clearly, John was not in prison because God didn't love him.
 - r. John was in prison because he was one important part in God's unfolding story.
 - s. If you feel disillusioned today, my prayer for you is that you would trust in Him again, and give Him time to reveal his plan in his time.
2. Discouragement – if you have ever waited for anything, you know this battle.
 - a. It is so hard to wait. It is so easy to think that God has forgotten us.
 - b. Phil. 2:12-16 Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.¹⁴ Do

everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

- c. God is working.
 - d. Breaking point – he has not forgotten you – service, so mad, so discouraged, ready to give up. He found us and pulled us out of the crowd...you're the mama now!
3. Distance – We can forget who we are and who God is – we drift, we go numb, we distance. We protest. We lose engagement.
- a. Heb. 2:1 - So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.
 - b. When life is hard, sometimes we go numb. This is a natural reaction to feeling too much for too long. But eventually, we need to feel again, to live again.
 - c. When my mom died, I went through a season that I didn't talk to God. I just couldn't. I was numb. One day, doing laundry, whisper, "I miss you." and I broke and let him in. I slowly, little by little came back to life.
 - d. It is easy to drift, but we it is worth remembering that He is the only one who can really help.
 - e. You don't have to say the right things, but as best you can, stay close.
4. Disoriented – When the tornado hits and things that you thought would last forever..don't. Its hard to get your bearings. You can forget who you are.
- a. Dreams take a back seat to survival.
 - b. We need people to remind us who we are – service at the other church, said I should have preached.
 - c. Moses was still a deliverer, even when he was on the backside of the desert.
 - d. Abraham was still the father to a nation, even when he was old and Sarah was barren.
 - e. Don't give up, its not over yet.

As I prayed for this weekend, this question came to mind:

What does it look like to wait well?

- 1. Make room for faith-
 - a. I will climb up to my watchtower
and stand at my guard post.
There I will wait to see what the Lord says
and how he will answer my complaint.
Then the Lord said to me,
"Write my answer plainly on tablets,
so that a runner can carry the correct message to others.
This vision is for a future time.

It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.
If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently,
for it will surely take place.
It will not be delayed.

2. Make room for tenacity –

- f. Gal. 6:7-9 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.
- g. The work of waiting is fighting off everything that keeps us from trusting God.

3. Make room for mystery -

- a. Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.
- b. The reality is that some things we don't know and He's not telling, but He is good and He is working.
- c. He has not forgotten, He is never early, never late. Wait on Him.