



Waiting
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week, as we are leading up to Christmas, Paster Lee is speaking to us about the night before the big event. It surely seems to be a long time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, especially for our kids, but this waiting period helps us to grow personally as God uses this time to teach us about Him, and just as important, about ourselves.

Question: What are you doing to prepare for Christmas this year?

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 2:22-33 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

Romans 8:24-25 (MSG) That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, or course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful in our expectancy.

John 8:12 I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

OBSERVATION

Simeon, meaning God has heard, was a priest in Jerusalem about the time Jesus was born. He was then an old man, but he was waiting for a marvelous event promised to him years before by God through the Holy Spirit. The Trinity was made complete and working in this event since the subject of their conversation and promise was the birth of Christ Jesus, the Messiah. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit indicated that the Gentiles would be part of the revelation of Jesus long before God opened Himself to them.

¹ All scripture translation is NIV unless otherwise indicated.

Most of the Bible is filled with people who were in the midst of waiting – they were just circling waiting for the fog to clear. Abraham waited (or not) for a son, the Israelites enslaved in Egypt waited for freedom and then waited forty years to enter God’s Promised Land. And then came the exiles.

Question: Which other Biblical figures had to wait a long time for promises or prayers to be answered? Describe their situations.

And this is where we are just prior to Jesus’ arrival. The people were looking and longing for God to not just restore their fortunes, but to set right all the things that were broken in the world. They couldn’t do anything but wait. At the moment Mary comes in with Joseph, Jesus had been born and Simeon couldn’t believe that the day he had been waiting for had finally arrived. Can we imagine him through the years and decades of waiting wondering if God was deaf? For all of those years he could have become resentful – he could have gone his own way and become calloused toward God. But, God was working and if Simeon were here today he would say to us, “Don’t waste your time while you are waiting.” He waited through every day with the promise that 1) the darkness we feel today will not have the last word; and 2) the anxiety we feel today will not have the last word; 3) the uncertainty we feel today will not have the last word. Why? Because the people walking and waiting in darkness have seen a great light. So, while we are waiting, let’s simply model Simeon whose faith was enlarged in the midst of longing.

Question: Why is waiting so difficult?

APPLICATION

We are all waiting for something. We are not in control. Life is a series of “waits”. Some of us are waiting to go to school while others are waiting to get out of school; some of us are waiting to get a job while others are waiting to get out of a job; some of us are waiting to get married while others are waiting to get unmarried; others of us are waiting to have children while others can’t wait until they leave home. All of this causes stress and anxiety because it never really completely stops! And this is not just personal – waiting is a community activity. We wait as a world together, we long for war to end, we wait for poverty to be eradicated, while we wait for racism to be overcome and dispelled. When we think about waiting, we don’t really mind ten minutes but twenty minutes? Three weeks but three months? One year but not five years? Surely there’s a limit, isn’t there? Langston Hughes said, “I am so tired of waiting, aren’t you? For the world to become good and beautiful and kind.” And we are waiting for righteousness. Yet the way we wait will directly impact our ability to heal.

Question: What are you waiting to happen in your personal life today? How long have you been waiting?

Question: What are you waiting and praying for in our world today?

Question: What do you do when your time limit for waiting is reached?

Every time we come to this season, we are reminded that darkness is a reality and we need God to break through it into His light. The great news is that He works in the darkness so it isn’t a waste of our time. The greatest moments have come when people experience darkness because God works there as He works in us. There are two things at play while we wait: 1) What or who we are waiting for, and 2) What God is working to form in us as we wait. What God is doing in us is just as important as what we are waiting for, but we often fail to allow our waiting period to transform us.

Question: What does your darkness look like today?

Question: While you are waiting, how are you being changed?

When we can’t properly wait, something else can begin to form within us. Things that embed themselves in us and become difficult to get over. We become: **1) Impulsive** and do things we never would have done, faster than we would have done them; **2) Disoriented** as we lose our bearings -- those things that are our anchors; **3) Frustrated**, so then we get angry, disillusioned, grumpy and disappointed. This is where waiting becomes wandering and a lot of us are doing that right now!!! We want normalcy, kids to go back to school, church to open and so the wandering begins. So, let’s model Simeon in his faith and live and learn in expectation: 1) The expectation that God is still moving; 2) The anticipation of what that will look like, and 3) The intention to embrace each day reflecting that reality. After all, isn’t our season filled with expectancy,

anticipation and opportunity? Our church has been waiting, but we haven't been wasting anything. We haven't been passive or silent. We have been rallying in our community: We've made calls to check deeply on people; we've looked for needs and did our best to meet them; we've embraced this season of "pivoting" and seen the unpredictable as opportunity.

Question: How have you risen to the challenge of meeting community needs this year?

The entirety of Christmas emerges and the celebration of Christ's arrival emerges from a place of waiting. People were waiting for God to break through and bring hope and healing to the world. He has come and forgiven us and saved us from our sin which separated us from our Father. God will show up. Even when we don't wait faithfully, He is faithful in His coming. It may not be in ways we expect, in a timeframe we may not anticipate, and in ways that may surprise us – so we need to be ready. Let's live like we believe it and are in it for the long haul, however long the wait!!!

Question: How have you managed to embrace each day with joy and expectation?

Question: Peter said, "Where would we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life!" (John 6:68) Why are you wandering today? Where else can you go?

PRAYER

Lord God, take our hands as we walk in the darkness. Do Your work in us as we wait. Grow us up along this journey with You so we can be mature and useful servants in Your Kingdom. Thank you for Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

QUESTIONS

Question: What are you doing to prepare for Christmas this year?

Question: Which other Biblical figures had to wait a long time for promises or prayers to be answered? Describe their situations.

Question: Why is waiting so difficult?

Question: What are you waiting to happen in your personal life today? How long have you been waiting?

Question: What are you waiting and praying for in our world today?

Question: What do you do when your time limit for waiting is reached?

Question: So, while you are waiting how are you being changed?

Question: What is God waiting for in you?

Question: What does your darkness look like today?

Question: How have you risen to the challenge of meeting community needs this year?

Question: How have you managed to embrace each day with joy and expectation?

Question: Peter said, "Where would we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life!" (John 6:68) Why are you wandering today? Where else can you go?