

Sermon Title: **“Waiting on Jesus”**

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

Text: Isaiah 40:25-31 / John 11:1-46

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -Luke 21:19

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. **Standing Firm** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an **upward, consistent, contagious, and outward** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. Learning (Isaiah 40:25-31)

“To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.” -Isaiah 40:25-26

Isaiah was a prophet sent by God to be His voice calling the Nation of Israel to place their trust in Him. A trust that would be *faith in motion*, trusting God to faithfully move on their behalf fulfilling His promises *to* their lives and *for* their Nation. In Isaiah's day the Nation was divided into two- Northern (Israel) & Southern (Judah). The Northern had chosen not to trust God when facing the threat of Assyrian bullies and instead allied themselves with Syria, trying to pressure Judah to come on board against Assyria.

Ahaz, a descendant of David, reigned in Judah at this time. He refused Isaiah's message and instead made an alliance with Assyria who in turn defeated Syria and then Israel. This compromise brought a short-term benefit as Assyria was now turning their teeth toward Judah. It is at this time that Ahaz's son, Hezekiah now reigned as king.

Hezekiah struggled to trust God and made a pact with another bully, Egypt to have help facing the bigger bully of Assyria. Angered, Assyria retaliated even harder against Judah. Hezekiah tried bribing Assyria, but they did not want money this time. The king of what was left of the Nation of Israel found himself backed into a corner with no other option but to trust in the Word of the Living God.

While Assyria and another rising power, Babylon were bigger and stronger than Judah, Judah was to be reminded that their strength has never relied upon themselves but their God. And Israel's God is a really, really Big God. As Assyria and Babylon look to the stars for direction (astrology / worship) Isaiah reminds Hezekiah that he knows the maker of these stars!

Isaiah 40 is the beginning of comfort passages written for those beyond Hezekiah's day who would find themselves exiled in Babylon- circumstances beyond their control.

*“Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.” **-Isaiah 40:27-28***

O *Jacob*, O *Israel*- God is reminded them that He sees the bigger picture of the work He is doing in their lives and invites them to trust Him. Jacob experienced God in such a way that his life, and name, were changed. Jacob became Israel, those exiled would be restored- God is faithful. Trust in Him!

What does this look like?

It is often a waiting game. But not waiting in the sense we may be thinking.

*“He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” **-Isaiah 40:29-31***

Wait in the Hebrew here refers to a *looking with expectation for God to fulfill His Word*. It implies a trust that while we do life in this world, in the ups and downs, God is faithful toward us in all that He has spoken to us.

It does not mean the physical action of not moving but our focus as we are moving.

Renew means to *transform in motion*; change as we go.

In this God is speaking encouragement through Isaiah that if we do life with God, trusting Him with our hand in His, He will transform us with each step. If we keep our eyes upon Him above our circumstances, choosing to trust His Word over our fears and the challenges life throws at us, His strength will carry us through as if it is our own.

Where naturally we are stronger in our youth, and weaker as we age, with God we grow stronger as we grow and mature in Him. His strength is not defined by our *limitations* but His *limitless* ability.

While we can affirm this truth, believing that He is faithful, trusting His timing can be difficult. What happens when we find ourselves waiting? We face the challenge and invitation to take matters into our own hands, make alliances with things not honoring to God and our relationship to Him, and often find ourselves spent from using our own strength until we have nothing left in our corner of life but a God who hasn't abandoned us.

II. Living (John 11:1-37)

Bethany was a place where Jesus teaches us the value of doing life with Him over things for Him. It is a place where our faith is stretched and may feel that it is near to breaking. It is here our patience is measured, endurance clocked, and focus revealed. *Do we trust Jesus enough to wait on Him?*

a. We can trust that Jesus sees more than we do.

*Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." **-John 11:1-4***

Jesus was not a stranger to building intimate relationships with those closest to Him despite is growing fame. As busy as Jesus was, He invested in family. Martha and Mary were among those whom He shared this bond with, including their brother Lazarus. John want's us to understand that these people were not random pawns in a game or characters in a story- there were *family* to Jesus.

They send word to Jesus because there was something about this illness that was life threatening. After all, Jesus is not just our *Savior*, He is also our *Healer*. And as they will soon realize, He is also our *Sanctifier* meaning He is transforming us as we do life with Him. They

would need to trust Jesus who sees the bigger Will of God for Lazarus and Mary, Martha, the Disciples, and you and me today. *Death may touch us, but ultimately we have victory and life through death in Jesus.*

b. *We can trust that Jesus loves us and those we love.*

*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. **-John 11:5-6***

In this we are invited by God to understand that He feels. The weight upon Jesus to stay when those whom He loved were pleading with Him to come and come quickly. How loveless this course of action must have been seen as. How *un-Messiah like* may have been the enemies' whisper in Jesus' ear. In Jesus' Divinity He knows ultimately what will happen; in His Humanity He feels the weight of fear, sorrow, and longing which pull at our hearts. I dare argue He hears this even now in our prayers as we pray for those we love in His Throne Room.

Share example -> "You don't love me"

Know this when we pray to Jesus, *Jesus loves us.* Jesus loves. Knowing what will happen does not mean it *was or is* easy for God to not act. *By staying, Jesus allowed those whom He loved to go through the sorrow, hardship, and mourning of Lazarus dying as well as allowing Lazarus to endure this illness unto his own death.*

How is that love?

c. *We can trust that Jesus has purpose in what He says and where He leads*

*Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." 12 The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, 15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 So Thomas, called the Twin,[b] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." **-John 11:7-16***

Why didn't Jesus just tell them Lazarus was dead? I think it was more for Jesus to focus on what was going to happen, while praying with the Father. What did Jesus do during those two days of waiting? There are no details; perhaps because Jesus went to a solitary place to pray for the strength to submit to His Father's Will, even when it means those He loves must grow through difficult circumstances.

d. *We can trust that Jesus is rightfully the center of it all (17-37)*

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles[c] off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Note that in this Jesus is taking a Truth from the Word and bringing it into direct application to Lazarus through Himself. In Martha's mind, the opportunity to do something had passed. Death is the finale'. ***However, with Jesus at the center of God's promises they transition from a word of hope to a living reality!***

Paul would later write,

"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

-1 Corinthians 15:54-57

While Martha may be beginning to see the birth of hope in this hopeless situation, **understand that no one expects Lazarus to come back to life.**

*When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved[e] in his spirit and greatly troubled.** 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 **Jesus wept.** 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" **-John 11:17-37***

In this the fruit of the enemy's deception of God being unloving comes out of those observing. Yet, in this staging of circumstances what Jesus is about to do no one, not even those not sold out to Jesus and His movement, can deny. Jesus was about to do something that would turn the world upside down.

Deeply moved is a very odd choice for John to use to describe what Jesus is feeling. Odd, that is, until we process it in light of this whole narrative- the Gospel of John and the *entire* Bible. Deeply moved is the sharing of the emotion and the birth of anger toward the cause of it. In other words, Jesus is navigating disgust at what sin has brought into our lives- the pain, suffering, and death- and is eager to command its departure.

See in Jesus the weight God has borne due to the cost of sin upon His children from Adam through the destruction of Israel and deportation in Exile of Judah, up through to those who would crucify His Son until the final rejection of Him before sin is removed forever.

In His spirit, His very core of Being, God is against sin and in this context it's not because of what it is, all that is contrary to Himself, but in the pain, suffering, and death that it brings to us created in His Image.

Troubled. Every part of who Jesus is has come to focus on this confrontation of the ultimate cost of sin- death. And Jesus is twitching with desire to burst forth healing into the face of with the cost of sin. *Death carried the crown of victory over humanity for far too long and the end is very near.*

Death was never meant to be a part of our story and Jesus is eager to get our story back on track!

I can't leave this point yet. It is too weighty for me. Do you see this?! Either Jesus is not God, or we've got the understanding of God from the Old Testament wrong. Jesus is God's way of saying; *this is who I Am!*

"They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" -Revelation 6:10

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." -2 Peter 3:9

e. *We can trust that Jesus can do above and beyond anything we can in our own strength, and that His timing is perfect (38-44)*

*Then Jesus, **deeply moved again**, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." -John 11:38-44*

The glory of God, meaning the absolute word from the most powerful of Beings, the most of anything God is and does. The crowning excellence for God is the resurrection life that is ours through His Son from sin and death to life abundant in and through Him to be experienced and enjoyed together for all eternity.

In Jesus, anything that is not of Him and His Kingdom must fall away from us as we put our hand in His, trusting Him as He leads us to do life with Him. Trusting His timing; even when it means we wait to see His promises come to fulfillment in our lives and the lives of those we love and intercede for.

III. Leading (John 11:45-46)

“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.”

-John 11:45-46

Waiting on Jesus will have its hard moments. Just like *Ahaz* and *Hezekiah*, the efforts of the enemy will press in on us to give in to fear and doubt, turning from God to the things God cannot bless. For some of us it is taking matters into our own hands, asking God for forgiveness rather than seeking His voice in permission and direction. We end up working in our own strength for Jesus that we burn out far away from Jesus. Or it may be turning to things that distract our spirit and bring short term pleasure and ease to our flesh.

Waiting on Jesus doesn't mean that we go on vacation to Disney Land while God fixes our marriages, homes, families, jobs, finances, relationships, churches, etc.

Waiting on Jesus does mean that where He leads, we go. What He asks of us we do, all the while keeping our eyes upon Him who alone brings forth the Salvation and Healing.

- *Trust that Jesus* sees what we do not; the bigger picture of God's Will in and through us.
- *Trust that Jesus* loves us and those we love.
- *Trust that Jesus* has purpose in what He says and where He leads.
- *Trust that Jesus* is rightfully the center of it all.
- *Trust that Jesus* can do above and beyond anything we can in our own strength, and that His timing is perfect.

*“He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” **-Isaiah 40:29-31***