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Message: Waiting Well

Transcribed Message

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Psalm 40:1-3

My name is Jordan Allen, and I have the privilege of filling in for our senior pastor Carlton this morning. And when I fill in, I typically just pick a passage that I've been studying, but this morning is going to look a little bit different, at least it'll feel different for me. I haven't really been studying a passage as much as I've been studying a practice. This morning, we're going to talk about waiting on the Lord. And the big idea is that waiting on the Lord is a gift for our benefit. As a result of that, we're going to be looking at Psalm 40 verses one through three.

I can't think of a better way to start than by going to the Lord in prayer. But before we do that, I also want to reference that our Toluca team heads out this morning. I got word that they've already landed safely in Dallas, and so they're going to make the connection there and they're going to be flying out again. We need to be praying for them, praying for their ministry, praying for their families, and just praying that God would just bless their time there. So with all that being said, let's go to the Lord in prayer and we'll dive in.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for today. We thank you for what you are doing in the life of this church. We thank you for that building. We thank you for providing it for us. We thank you for all the opportunities that we are going to have because of it. We pray that we are good stewards with it, Lord. And God, I also want to lift up our teachers. I pray that you just be with them, give them strength this week, and help them to have an eternal perspective of their ministry that they have as teachers. And God, we also want to lift up the Toluca team – Ray, Al, Rick, and Kelly – as they travel down there. Please keep them safe in their travels and please go before them and prepare the way for them and bless their ministry. And Lord, I ultimately thank you for your Son, for his life, his death, his resurrection. For it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Well, you might be wondering, Jordan, why have you been studying waiting? If you don't know me, I have a lot of quirks. One of my many quirks is I get anxious about time. I actually can't stand when I'm late. Now, if you're late, that's fine. There's grace. There's patience. But I don't like being late. I don't actually even like being on time. I prefer being early. If you want to see this in action, just look at me next Sunday when that five-minute countdown comes on in the foyer. I will be the guy who's anxiously rushing in here. And as a result, I confess that I don't like to find myself waiting, especially if it's something that's going to alter my timeline or my plans. And in God's great desire to sanctify me, he often allows me to be put in positions where I find myself waiting.

As a result, I have felt called and convicted to work on waiting and studying that in my life, which is always fun. But what I'm learning is that when I wait, I often feel out of control. That feeling of uncertainty is challenging. It's sanctifying. I'm learning that there is a lot of growth in waiting. But what's interesting is we often associate waiting as just something that is negative. We often think of it as just being something that is causing us to be late. We think of it as being a waste of time. Waiting is often uncomfortable. I'm learning that we often prefer our comfort over our growth.

But as you read through scripture, you quickly see that God does not operate on our timelines. One thing we know about God that he is never late, nor is he ever early. Always in his divine providence, sovereignty, and plan, he is always right on time as he calls his people into moments of waiting on him. And that's what we're going to be discussing today.

But before we get into that, I do want to give a little context for the book of the Psalms. Psalms is a book that is made up of a lot of songs, prayers, and poems. And although David did not write all the Psalms, he is credited with writing majority-wise, and percentage-wise, the majority of them. Now, if you broke Psalm 40 into two sections, you would get verses one through 10, and that is David giving thanks for past deliverances. It's in a past tense, and he's talking about his commitment to doing God's will going forward.

But then there's this unique shift in verses 11 through 17, and this is where David is basically saying: and God, you will continue to deliver me because I will need it going

forward from my sins and the trials in my life. So, this passage can be seen as a psalm of thanksgiving with almost a psalm of a cry for help.

Now, we do not know which event in David's life he is specifically referring to. Most people believe that this psalm was written towards the end of David's life. He could be referring to any number of moments, from being anointed at a young age and having to wait 15-plus years for the fulfillment of that. But David was also somebody who knew he was spiritually waiting. He could be referring to the fact that he was waiting for God to deliver him from his sins, his sin nature, and the ripple effects of his sins, something that could only come from the upcoming Messiah. All that to say is we don't know specifically which event that David is referring to, but we do know that David was no stranger to having to wait.

We can now transition into the text as we look at verse one, where it says, I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and he heard my cry. Now, what's interesting here is the wording. The Hebrew word for waiting, and I think I'm getting this right, is pronounced *qavah*. What David actually says is he says that word twice: *qavah, qavah*. A more literal translation would be to say, as I was already waiting, I waited on the Lord. This is not a singular moment. What we understand from this is that David was waiting. This was an intense, patient, continuous waiting. David was waiting with expectations. David's cry, or his prayer, was a continuous one. From the outside looking in, we could look at David and say, David, God is not answering your prayers, and it looks like there is no hope of him doing so. But David still prayed with anticipation that God would hear him and deliver him.

I think the first thing that we can learn from this is that biblical waiting is active. I think it's important that we understand how David waited was up to him. The rest was up to God, as he was trusting God to deliver him, as he was walking with him daily, as he was crying out to him regularly.

I think it's important for us to see what David didn't do in this situation. He didn't try to take matters into his own hands. He actively waited. He didn't try to rush out and get in front of God. He didn't try to speed up God's timing as he was trying to rush out in front of him.

As I was thinking about this and just trying to picture this imagery of rushing out, I was reminded of the first dog that my wife Erin and I got together. He was an English pointer by the name of Tucker. And Tucker was a big dog. Erin and I, every once in a while, would have this crazy idea of, hey, let's take Tucker for a walk. And so he was big, so normally I was the one that held his leash. But I remember just holding his collar. And the moment I attached that leash to his collar, he would just take off. He would be rushing. And he'd be pulling out. And I couldn't move fast enough for him. He wanted to just go. So much so that he'd pull on his leash so hard that he'd be lifting himself up. His front paws would be in the air and he would almost be hopping down the road. I've sometimes wondered, what did the cars think as they were driving by, as they see this dog hopping? But he would literally be just pulling on it so much that he would be choking. I remember thinking this dog would rather choke himself than to just walk with me. He didn't understand that his collar and my holding him back was actually for his good. Had I let him go, had I let him leave, he would have chased every distraction. He would have gotten us lost. He would have probably ran us out in front of traffic. It wouldn't have been good. He needed to learn to stay with me, to stay near me, to walk with me, and to realize that we were on my time and not his because I was the one who knew where we were going. I was the one that knew what was best. And he just didn't understand. And finally, that dog would get so exhausted, it was like he would collapse, and it was like he would just be like, all right, I give up. I don't know where we're going. I'm just going to walk with you. And in those moments, he would rest when I stopped, and he would walk when I walked, and he would stay beside me. And we actually finally started having some enjoyable walks together.

I think that's what we're like with God, like an English pointer who becomes fixated on where we think we need to go and on our time. What we find ourselves almost saying in that moment is God, I don't want to wait for you. In fact, I actually think I know where we're going, and I think I know a better way. I think I can spiritually bypass the lessons that you're going to try to teach me in this moment as I ask that you follow me and I lead. God either allows us to run only to the end of that leash, and then we're met with this call to wait. But

sometimes, we also ignore that calling. We ignore that warning as we rush off and face the dangers of this world as we try to speed up God's timing. Can we all be honest and acknowledge that we've probably done that in our lives?

We can also look in Scripture and see examples of when that has happened. You know, my mind immediately goes to Abraham. You know, Abraham was 75 years old when he was promised a son with his wife, Sarah. We see that Abraham had to wait 25 years until he was 100 for him to finally have a son, Isaac, with Sarah. But that wasn't before Abraham tried to speed up God's will by taking his second wife, Hagar, and having a son, Ishmael, with her, all because he didn't want to wait. And those were things that would cause a lot of family conflict and a lot of negative results.

But what we learn from David is what it looks like to actively wait. See, David was active in a way that drew him into greater dependence upon God, while Abraham in this moment was active in a way that tried to bypass God entirely. And it's in that struggle that I think we can learn that waiting just grows us in our faith. Waiting often refines our character. We learn a lot about ourselves in moments of waiting. But what we see from David is that we can control how we wait and if we are going to wait well.

We wait well when we understand (now I'm going to contradict myself here, but stick with me) that biblical waiting is also very passive. Biblical waiting is passive. When we reach that point, like Tucker, when we say, I don't know what you're doing, I don't know where we're going, but I'm going to trust you. I'm going to actively wait. I'm going to walk with you. Yes, I'm going to cry out to you, but I'm going to be the recipient of what you're going to do and use this time of waiting and teach me to abide.

Once again, biblical waiting reminds us that we are not in control, that we are not the main characters of this story and all we can really be is passive to what God is going to do. So, it's this understanding that we are active in a way that we are crying out to God, that we are diving deep into his word, that we're meeting together, that we're serving together, we're worshipping while we are passively letting him shape, mold, and sanctify us as we wait on this timing. And it is a tension that we are going to struggle with from time to time.

But as we go through that, hopefully we realize that we are not waiting alone, that we are in the presence of God. David is pointing us to that as we look back at the passage, verse one. When we see the phrase he inclined to me and heard my cry, what David is actually doing is painting this picture that God came near him, that God removed all space between them, almost as if to say he came near me so that he could hear me better. David is saying, I waited faithfully for you and you came near me. You heard me, and I found favor in your eyes with my persisting cries. David understood that God was near him in this moment. David was not just waiting for God who is off somewhere, he was waiting with God.

I think it's very important that we get that reminder today. Because the truth is, waiting often feels lonely. Waiting often makes us feel isolated. Scripture is full of moments where people are waiting on the Lord. We see Joseph waiting in prison and as a slave for 13 years. We see Noah waiting for the promises of the upcoming flood as he builds an ark, something that people said probably took anywhere between 50 to 120 years. We see Hannah crying out to God regularly because she was unable to conceive in 1 Samuel 1, something that people speculated has probably taken her over 10 years. Scripture doesn't say, but I can't help but think, somewhere in that time, if you were to ask them like, hey, do you feel alone? They'd probably say yes, I feel very lonely. I feel very unseen.

But scripture is also clear time and time again that God was near them, that God blessed them, that God heard them, that God remembered them. He saw them as he was working his plans out through them. I think it shows us that yes, we may feel isolated. We may feel unseen. But our feelings do not dictate the nearness of God in our seasons of waiting.

I love that David takes it a step further here as he reminds us that God does so much more than just hear him, he comes near him. But also that God is the only one who is capable of rescuing him as we look in verse two where it says, he drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the mire bog, and he set my feet upon a rock, making my step secure. So obviously, as we think of this pit of destruction, it's a metaphor, it's not a literal

pit. But what is interesting about this is the word for destruction here. When you see this word in the Old Testament, another way that we could translate this is a pit of noise. And when we see this word being used in the Old Testament, it often referred to the noise of the crashing of waves or the crashing waves of an enemy's attack. What David's really doing, he's painting this picture of I was in this pit, or better yet, I was in this grave, and these waves are crashing down on me and my grave is just filling up and I can't escape because my feet are essentially in quicksand. There is no hope of anyone outside of God rescuing me. And that's where David is saying that his waiting took place.

I think that shows that waiting is sometimes painful. But painful waiting teaches us a lot about our faith. It was a few years ago, I ended up in the hospital for a week. There was a bad situation, but I initially went in for a kidney stone. Now, if you've never had a kidney stone, I don't really recommend it. It was extremely painful and excruciating. In fact, I woke up one morning and I went to my wife and I was like, I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm in a lot of pain. I'm going to the ER. You can come with me if you want, but don't slow me down. My wife knows that when I say I'm going to the ER that something is wrong. Not because I'm tough, I'm not, far from it, but I am cheap and ER visits are expensive. And so, we go to the ER and I'm walking in from the parking lot, and as I do, I see these multiple ambulances. They're just pouring in and they're unloading people. I walk into the room and I see the receptionist behind the counter. And she looked at me and said two things. She looked at me and she said, I can already tell by how much pain you're in. You must have a kidney stone. She diagnosed me right when I walked in the door.

The second thing she said is, I'm really sorry but there was this multiple car accident. Our rooms are full and you're going to have to wait. So I'm sitting there in the waiting room just dealing with wave upon wave of pain. And after a few hours, maybe a few minutes, again, I'm not that tough. I don't know how long it was. I go up to her and I said, look, I don't mean to be insensitive. I don't mean to be disrespectful. I get there are people in the back who are so far worse off than I am. But can you tell me how long you think I'm going to have to wait? And she looked at me and she was so sweet. She was so understanding. But she was like, no, I'm sorry. I have no idea how long your wait is going to

have to be. And I looked at her and I'm serious. I said this, I said, can you just guess? Can you just lie to me? Just give me something.

I've thought about that a lot since then, because what I was really saying is I was can you just show me the finish line? Give me a glimpse of the finish line, a light at the end of the tunnel, so that I know how much strength I need to provide to make it there. In that moment, I wasn't operating off a faith and a promise that a room was opening up. I was operating on sight and my strength. Her providing a time by lying to me wasn't changing a minute of my wait. I just wanted to know that there was a finish line coming so that I knew how much strength I needed to make it because I was beginning to lose this mental battle.

I've realized over the years that we often mistake our strength for faith in moments of waiting. But painful waiting has a way of differentiating our strength from our faith, as we often approach God the same way. As we say, God, show me that this situation will end the way that I want it to, and then I'll trust you. God, remove me from this situation, and then I will understand and then I will follow you. God, show me 10 steps down the road, and then I'll take my first step and I'll follow you in that moment. We want to call that faith. But in moments of painful waiting, we are brought intentionally to the end of our strength so that God could do a work with us in our faith. God uses our waiting to grow us in our faith, not just our strength. As a result of that, we are often not shown the finish line, the end product as we wait. God just calls us to follow him today because God knows that once we have sight as people, we're not going to operate off of faith. In fact, sight in moments like this would be completely counterproductive to the sanctification and the lessons that God is trying to teach us about our faith. Hebrews 11:1 points to this when it says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Sight does not always lead to faith. How many times in our study of the book of John have we seen people talk to Jesus, see his miracles, see him face to face, and they still don't have faith. But faith often leads to sight. Our painful waiting without an end in sight always serves God's purpose as it draws us to depend upon him more as we conform to his image.

But the good news is this. David reminds us that God does not leave us in our pain either. He says this, "He set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure." God put David on a secure foundation, a place that he could not slip and fall back into the grave because David's steps are now secure. And similar to the pit, we believe this is a metaphor. Now, what I love about this is you go throughout the book of Psalms, you see David referencing a rock all the time. Every time he's doing it, he's talking about our Lord. He's talking about the upcoming Messiah. He's talking about God.

In Psalm 18:2, it says, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield in the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." So what David is saying is Lord, you have delivered me. You are my rock. You are my foundation. You are my firm footing. I can't fall back into the grave because of what you've done for me. You are my security and you are where I find my confidence.

And for David, I do believe this was a moment where we see the prophetic meeting the contemporary. I don't think David is saying that he is never going to have a need while he's here on this earth again and he's never going to have to cry out to God. The chapter concludes with David saying, and you will continue to rescue me. What I think David is saying here is, Lord, I have seen the evidence of your rescuing me. And I believe that you have rescued me eternally. And it's with that same confidence that I can, after looking in the past and what I believe is my future, I can be confident when I say that I will trust you to deliver me today and tomorrow. And as a result of that, I will wait on you. I say all that because I think it's important for us to understand that we are never guaranteed temporary relief in the way that we might want it while we're here on this earth. Sometimes our waiting will take an entire lifetime, and I think David surely knew that.

It leads me to my next point which is I believe waiting is about our obedience, not about worldly results. I would love to stand up here and say that if you're in a season of waiting, it's just going to be a small season of your life. But the reality is that our season of waiting is temporary in the scheme of eternity because our lives are temporary in the scheme of eternity and our waiting could take all of it. Once again, we just need to look at scripture and we see some examples of this, of people who waited and never got to

experience what, from the outside looking in, it might appear that they were waiting on. My mind immediately goes to Moses in this moment. Moses waited in the wilderness or was in the wilderness leading for 40 years. And right around the time it was time for them to enter the promised land, God goes to him and says, Moses, not you. You don't get to go. Last week, Brian brought up that John the Baptist waited in a prison cell to be delivered and that people speculate that that waiting was up to a year. Neither one of those situations ended in the way that you would think they would for people who serve God, who were committed to following him.

And again, from the outside looking in, we may look at them and be like, guys, your waiting was in vain. It was pointless. You didn't even get what you were waiting on. But it was never about their expected worldly results. It was about their obedience. It was about their eternal rescue. It was about their eternal home. that same truth applies to us as well. Worldly results are never guaranteed. We can't control those results anyway. All we can be is obedient and find our hope in the eternal rescue. And that is enough for us to be confident. That is enough to still praise God in our seasons of waiting.

David speaks of that confidence and praise as he says in verse three: He put a new song in my mouth, the song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. Now when we see David sing a song, it was always related to a deeply personal moment in his life. David's songs were theological truths put in song form to serve as a reminder going forward. And I think it's important to recognize here is this song begins with gratitude. He talks about how God has delivered him so that he can then assure himself and the people listening that God would continue to deliver him going forward. Our testimonies of gratitude remind us that God has already delivered us already.

Can you imagine if the next time we are called into a season of waiting that we just took one moment to remember all the things that God has done for us, all the ways that God has rescued us, answered our prayers, and we just started with the cross alone? I mean, that would be enough in and of itself. But we would have so much more that we could talk about. It would quickly change our perspective in moments of waiting. What

David is saying my testimony is going to serve as a reminder for me and it's going to give me more reason to praise you going forward.

But it's also going to be for others. He says, many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. That's the power of testimonies. He's saying that my waiting, my deliverance will be remembered by me, but it'll also be witnessed by others. For us today, we need to realize that our waiting and our faithfulness in waiting will hopefully give us an opportunity to share the gospel with other people because it will allow us to share the reason for the hope that we have.

The next point. Waiting is sometimes for the benefit of others. I know that doesn't make it better. If you're anything like me, you're probably thinking: great, so I have to wait so it benefits others? It doesn't make that easy but watching how we wait and how we trust God is a powerful witness to the world around us. It won't make sense to them, and it should hopefully set us apart.

In this moment, I'm reminded of Acts 16 and in that, you have Paul and Silas who were falsely imprisoned and mistreated. Scripture tells us that while they waited in their prison cell, they sang hymns. And if you remember the rest of the story, it was around midnight, and there was this violent earthquake. Their chains fell off and their cell doors flew open and they had every opportunity to run. But they stayed and they waited in their cell. It was at that time that the jailer came and he realized the doors were open. He was about to take his own life because at that time under Roman law if a Roman soldier allowed a prisoner to escape, he would be substituted in and they would take the same punishment that was meant for the prisoner. But before he could do that, Paul stopped him and he said, hey, we didn't run. We stayed. We waited. Verse 29 says this: the jailer called for the lights. He rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, sirs, what must I do to be saved? The jailer saw that there was something different about Paul and Silas because they had every opportunity to run, but they stayed in their cell. They stayed in prison and they trusted God.

God does not waste our waiting. Our waiting, whether it is painful or inconvenient, is a powerful testimony to the world around us, especially when they see us wait well. So

even when we don't see it, even when we don't understand it, we can trust that God is good, and that God is sovereign as he calls us to wait on him. We recognize waiting always impacts our lives, but it may also impact the lives of those watching us.

And again, I know it doesn't make it any easier. I know some of us may be feeling like we're waiting in really difficult situations, waiting to feel near to God again, waiting to be delivered from pain, whether that be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. Some of us are waiting for God to redeem a situation, to reconcile a relationship. Some of us probably feel like we are constantly attacked by the enemy. Some of us are waiting just for the next big step in where God is calling us to go. And we find ourselves asking, God, how long am I going to have to wait? How much longer do I have to go through this? When will you deliver me? When will you show me my next step?

The truth is waiting is very hard. Growing in our faith is hard. Sanctification is hard. But I think David and others show us what we need to do to wait well, and that is to give us an eternal perspective about waiting.

With that being said, we always ask the question, what can we take away from this? And there's obviously a lot that we can learn from the people of Scripture, but I want to highlight three things that I feel like that God is teaching me about waiting. So first is this, waiting prepares us to do God's will. You know, Joseph waited in prison for 13 years. Those years weren't meaningless. Those years weren't wasted. God was equipping him to lead in Egypt. Sometimes we wait for who God is saying that we will be.

Second, waiting draws us into deeper dependency upon God. It causes us to depend on and focus more on the one who delivers us, the one who sustains us, the one who provides for us. In moments of waiting, we should always focus on God, not on our circumstances, not on our gifts, not on our strengths, not on our buildings, not on our worldly security blankets. We depend on God, the gift giver, the one who is always strong when we are weak.

And lastly, we should learn to see waiting as a gift because it's the understanding that it's for our good. The blessing at the end of a long life of waiting at times is always for our benefit because the blessing, especially when we wait well, is a deeper relationship

with Christ. I'm reminded of Luke 2 and Simeon. If you remember this story, he was promised by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Messiah's face. And the gift from a long life of waiting was worth every second because the gift was that he got to see Jesus face-to-face. Now, we can't ever control that we have to wait. But my prayer for me, my prayer for you, my prayer for this church is that the next time we are in a season of waiting, whether that's as individuals or collectively, is that we wake up, we go to work, we cry out to God daily, we cry out to him often, and we dive deeper into his word in community. We don't stop meeting together. We serve one another, and we worship God while we wait. I hope we are people who worship while we wait. That's what we can control. That's all we can do. And I want to see our waiting as sanctifying. I know that we can wait confidently and we can still praise God in those moments because we know the good news.

The good news is that we may be praying for temporary relief, for temporary rescue, but we don't have to wait on our eternal rescue. That is something that was accomplished by Jesus on the cross. If you are here and you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that is not something you have to wait on. That is something you can do today. And it is by believing that God is holy, good, and perfect. It's our sin that separates us from a perfect and holy God. But while we were still sinners, God loved us so much that he sent his only Son, Jesus, who came and lived a perfect and sinless life, who willingly went to the cross and died for your sins and for mine. And he was buried.

The scripture says that he rose again three days later, conquering the grave, conquering our sin. And if we believe that Jesus is who he says he is, we believe that his life, his death, his resurrection was enough, then scripture says that we can be saved and an eternity with God can be ours. That's our hope. That's our foundation. That's the rock on which we stand. And that's where we find our security in moments of waiting.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you so much for your patience, for your infinite wisdom. We thank you that your ways are not our ways. Thank you for growing us in our faith. Thank you for continuing to develop us and mold us to become more like you. Lord, I pray for anyone here who's in a season of waiting. I pray that you draw them near. Help

them to feel your presence. Help them to recognize your goodness. Lord, I pray that you surround us all, but especially for those waiting, with community – people who will remind us of what you already have done for us. Lord, I pray for an eternal perspective and help us to be people who wait well, people who worship while we wait. Thank you that we don't have to wait for a relationship with you. Thank you that we don't have to wait for the eternal deliverance, Lord. Thank you for Jesus, for his death, his resurrection, and for the gift of salvation. For it's in his name we pray, amen.