

WD May 23, 2022

“I Don’t Like To Wait!”

I don’t like to wait. I don’t like to wait because it usually means that the ability to move things forward is not in my hands. Recently, I waited with a family at an ER (I won’t say who we waited for right now—sorry). We were there with the family from 9AM til 11PM sitting outside in the weather—thankfully it was a decent day. All the while we waited anticipating the patient would move from the ER to the OR.

Well, I learned quickly what both of those mean. “Er...I think it will be soon”...”Er...I don’t think it will be much longer.” “Er...I don’t really know when.” And OR means, “The surgery is scheduled for 1PM OR 2PM or 5PM or maybe later.” Only one visitor at a time meant also we could only go in one at a time sharing the same visitor’s badge. And all the while we waited, we didn’t know if we could to leave to get some food or something and/or stay because we held on anticipating anytime an important surgery would take place.

Turning to a different example--Waiting in traffic means waiting for everyone to narrow into the one lane and be cooperative. But there’s always people who have to get ahead of you and me and drive all the way up as far ahead as they can get and then cut in. Which, of course, slows everything down.

Another example: Waiting in line for a roller coaster depends on how fast they can get the people loaded and unloaded each time the machine comes in. Waiting in line at the doctors depends on how overbooked the schedule is for that day. But waiting at the ER always depends on who is more serious. The day we were at the ER several helicopters came and went. It has to be real bad for someone to be flown in. This naturally means they need attention first and OR’s first. But this also delayed things for the patient we came to support.

We eventually left the hospital and were home by 11PM-ish. I was glad to get home and got to bed. But the waiting is hard because it depends on someone other than me doing something. It depends on the mechanics of the day coming together in a constructive way that meets the need at hand. Waiting feels helpless but it is never passive.

While we waited, we encouraged one another. Prayed for the patient. We talked and caught up on a lot of things. We even got to meet the co-workers of the patient who all came up to see how their friend and colleague was doing, which was heart-warming. The waiting didn’t happen in a vacuum. There was substance to it. It was boring too, don’t get me wrong. But a lot of it had some good too. And in our case, we knew that the surgery would do some good and provide a healing. It was more like waiting for the rollercoaster than on a Politician. At least at some point (Most of the time) you know that you will get to ride the coaster. The anticipation of something worthwhile would happen eventually...”Er...Sometime that day at least.”

Consider those who had waited on the Lord. Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac to be born. His waiting was filled acts of obedience to the Lord. Jacob waited 14 years for Rachel, and worked diligently for His Uncle Laban and increased his own flocks in the process. David waited for twenty years to fully be king of Israel. Simeon and Anna waited their whole lives in hopes of seeing the Messiah. But perhaps the one I relate to most is Joseph who was unfairly sold into slavery by his own brothers, traded to work for Potiphar, and then ends up in prison for a crime he didn’t commit. Joseph didn’t exactly know that what may happen to him but none-the-less remained utterly faithful to the Lord.

Perhaps I would relate our waiting the other day to Joseph’s time in prison. Consider Genesis 39:9-23. ⁹So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, ¹⁰ and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.”

¹²“This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days. ¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

²⁰ Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: ²¹ He restored the chief

cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand—²² but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

For two full years Joseph waited for the cup-bearer to remember. He waited for the cupbearer to keep his word and had no power to move things along any faster. Joseph wanted the cup-bearer to remember him so he could get out of that difficult place. Who wouldn't? But all the while he waited, he filled his waiting with service worthy of the Lord. So faithful was Joseph at taking care of the prison that the warden left everything in his care. What's more, like the godly people we mentioned above the one who remembers is the Lord Himself just like when he worked at Potifar's house. Jesus will never forget you nor His promises to you. Jesus who keeps all promises has also promised that our Labor in the Lord is never in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). Neither is our waiting.

Joseph suffered greatly in his waiting. He put up with a lot of trouble he didn't ask for nor want. But he served the Lord faithfully in the context of his waiting. We are encouraged to do no less. We cannot control all that goes on around us. We can however, choose how we wait. Our waiting can have substance. It may mean standing outside of a hospital just to be available if called upon. Waiting may provide opportunity for prayer and for a chance to become ready for something else as was the case with Joseph. His waiting groomed him to become the instrument that would save his family from starvation. Waiting may be what we need to cool our anger, or gain an ear to listen, or even to humble ourselves for repentance. Waiting can build an appreciation for what God may provide.

I understand that not all waiting results in a good outcome as it did this last week. But I can still say that waiting especially with others can summon grace in a way that is at least comforting. I am always grateful when I see someone give up their day to be with someone who needs the company while waiting. It holds its own compassion and healing. May the Lord grant us patience. May the Lord grant us wisdom to make the most of our waiting. And may our waiting for the Lord's return bless us with great anticipation and appreciation for eternal life in Jesus.

Pastor Matthew Woods

John 3:30