

Christ Church it is great to be with you, and I want to tell you that if you're watching on Saturday, Happy 4th of July, thanks for spending this holiday with us. And if you're watching on Sunday, I hope you will consider driving to your campus for drive-through communion. I got to serve it last month in June, and I will just say that I was surprised by how meaningful it was. More than I expected. It's one of those things where you'd say: yeah, it actually was worth it to get into the car and drive to the church. Or your bike, or your scooter, all are welcome.

Well speaking of getting in your car and driving, last week I had to get my emissions test done, so I drove up to Waukegan and when I pulled into the lot there were 3 lines. And I was faced with that incredibly important decision that many of us face throughout our days. Which line do we choose? There are a number of factors that go into this decision. Now at the emissions line it's different than the decision at a grocery store, which is a little more complicated. Do you pick the line with the most people? You have to be careful because you also have to pay attention to the number of items in the cart. Perhaps you've done what I have which is, if you have an extra person in your party, you have one person go to the other line and you abandon the one that goes slower. Foolproof.

But with just one car, you can't do that. And you're in your car, so there's no chance to jump lines. So the car directly in front of me made what I would consider a common rookie mistake, which is choosing the one closest without taking into consideration the gaps between the cars and so on.

But if you're like me, you're not just trying to get through as quickly—you now have another car to compare yours to. And sure enough, at least on this particular day...that poor sucker was still 2 cars deep when I was done and driving away.

Now, don't worry, I didn't jump out of my car and call them a loser. Not this time. No, I just *thought* that in my head as I drove off.

Now why is this? Why do I care so much about this? Part of it has to do with my competitive nature for sure, but it also has to do with the fact that we all hate waiting. Waiting for anything at all.

Why do we **hate waiting so much**? Part of it is our **culture** which has taught us to value our time so much that we think we deserve better than having to wait. But **part of it is that waiting is really hard**. And waiting for an emissions test is **one thing**, but **waiting for God becomes a lot more challenging**.

TRANSITION

Our passage today has at its center **the concept of waiting**, waiting for **God**. Let's take a look at it, Psalm 130.

EXPOSITION

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

2 Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive

to my cry for mercy.

The psalm begins with lament. The **psalmist is in a state of needing help**. Out of the depths he cries out. If anyone has ever wondered **if people in the Bible can relate to the problems** in *my* life, here's your answer. Out of the **depths**, it says, **from a dark place**. This is a person who **needs God's attention**.

Verse 3...

³If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,

Lord, who could stand?

⁴But with you there is forgiveness,

so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

What this tells us is that waiting begins with a **recognition of your own sin and brokenness** before God. The psalmist provides this **perspective**: It's like he's saying, "The reality is that, while I need you in this **darkness**, I recognize that **you owe me nothing**. And that **my greatest deeds** can't overcome my **shortcomings**. If you kept track of all of the ways I fall short, I'd never be able to **hold my head high** in front of you. But with God there is forgiveness." **This line right here is a sign of what the gospel is all about**: if you took careful track of all the ways we fall short, who could stand, but...with the Lord there is **forgiveness**. Even here in the OT we see that we are **saved not by our deeds**, but because of *God's love*.

And then we get to what I think is the heart of the passage, verse 5.

⁵I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

Out of a sense of his own **sinfulness** before God, the Psalmist says this: **I wait**. Moreover, **my whole being waits** (or my soul) waits for the Lord, and **in his word I hope**. And then the repetition comes, which is a Hebrew device to demonstrate emphasis. He repeats in verse 6: my soul waits for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

And then he ends the Psalm by saying to Israel: **put your hope in the Lord**. Even though he recognizes that his trials are overwhelming him, he's in the depths...yet he says that Israel should put its **hope in God**, and that **redemption** will ultimately come.

So what are we to learn from this short psalm? I have 3 things for you today before we turn our attention to communion.

1. When we suffer, we can bring our pain to God.

Remember that the message of the Bible is that **life is hard and God is good**. He is the one to whom you should bring your **pain**, your **anger**, your **frustration**. He is the one that made us, that knows us, and when life is hard, it is entirely appropriate for us to come to **him** in our anguish.

My second point builds on the first, and it's this...

2. When we suffer, our hope should come from the word of God, not from another word.

Verse 5 says "In his word I put my hope."

As I look back on the last three and a half months, what I call "Early Covid", like the end of March and early April, I know that I spent it turning to lots of places **other than God**. I watched the **evening news** a lot. I read the **Chicago Tribune** online several times a day. And I didn't necessarily recognize it at the time, but I was putting my hope in **many other words**. We were all looking for **good news**—

- what's the stock market?
- What's **unemployment** looking like?
- Is the **number of infections** going down or up?
- How is it **transmitted**?
- How long will **schools** will be closed?
- How will this affect my **constitutional right to watch sports**? They're canceling March Madness? They can't do that! That's illegal, isn't it?

There are a lot of **other words** in the world, and they change a lot?

- Masks **shouldn't** be worn. Masks **must** be worn.
- **This** drug looks to be effective. This drug is **not** effective.
- When summer comes, the virus will **diminish**. Summer is here: the virus is **not diminishing**.
- If you have the **antibodies**, you're immune. If you have the antibodies, you **might not be immune**.

I have to admit that I got very **wrapped up** in it. And there's nothing wrong with staying **up on the news**. But when your **hope** is in **that word**, and not in the **word of God**, you're putting your hope in the wrong place.

I'll illustrate it another way. Last weekend, my family and I, along with some other good friends, installed a new retaining wall in my backyard. There are 182 bricks back there, along with probably 2 tons of gravel and so on. But in order to have a straight wall that

doesn't fall over, I used a level on every brick. There were times when it looked to my eye like the brick was good.

That's true in my own life. I'm very much an "it's fine" kind of guy. "It's fine, it will be ok, it's fine." But it's not always fine. What I think isn't what matters. It's what the level says. The level doesn't lie. And if you want a good, solid wall...you trust the level.

Likewise, we have to **trust** in the word of God, and not in our own **hunches**.

RECAP

So...when we suffer, we can come to God with our pain, and we should put our hope in his word and not in other words and my final point, which I'll spend more time on, is this.

3. When we suffer, we must cultivate a lifestyle of waiting for God, more than we wait for anything else.

We wait all the time in life. But technology has drastically **lowered our threshold** for what we think is reasonable in relation to waiting.

Think about this—a hundred years ago, if you wanted to **cook** anything, it was quite a process. If your meal involved **meat**, you would have to **obtain** an animal, kill that animal, then prepare the animal. Now you have to chop down a tree in order to get wood and build a fire, and so on and so on. **It's a full day process.**

Now, you put a **frozen dinner** in the microwave for 2 minutes, and you are eating a meal. There's no waiting at all.

That's with food. And of course, **smartphones** have forever altered the way we live. We all know that person in our life who, if they don't get an answer right away, they text back with the **exclamation point or question mark**.

We expect **immediate answers**.

I'm not saying I want to go back, I'm saying that our **expectations have been changed forever for what waiting is about**. Our brains have been rewired to expect immediate results. We don't have to wait for much anymore, and when we do, we're annoyed.

WAITING

And the heart of our passage is the example of the psalmist who says: **I wait for the Lord**, and I hope in his word.

When we're in the depths, we want the same kind of results as a microwaved meal. We want **freedom**. We want **answers**, we want **sicknesses healed, financial troubles gone, favorite sports teams successful**. And we cry out to God out of our **misery**.

And what is the **response**? Sometimes the response is: Wait. **Just wait**.

We think there's something **wrong with God**. We think: you must not be getting the **picture** here, pal. I need help **now**. Sometimes relief comes **quickly**, but sometimes, the answer is...**wait**. So what I want to suggest to you is that the world would tell us to

cultivate a lifestyle of hurry and urgency. And I believe that God would have us cultivate a **lifestyle of waiting and patience** and trust in God and in his word.

What does that look like? I think first and foremost, it looks like remembering that, when we're in the depths and the answer doesn't come quickly—there should be a trigger that says: that thing I need so much...I'm supposed to want **God** more than I want that.

I think the word “**more**” in the passage is a really important one. The psalmist says that “**MORE** than a watchman waits for the morning...I wait for you, God.”

He is reminding himself, preaching to himself...you think you need this, and maybe you do. But what you **need more than that is the God** who will provide for all of your needs, and more.

It's the concept we find in the Sermon on the Mount in Mathew 6 when Jesus says: you think you need food and clothes and yes, you do, but God knows that. So instead of seeking after **those** things...seek **God**, seek **HIS kingdom**, and you'll get God, and all those other things you need as well.

And **waiting** is a big part of it. Waiting helps us to get **realigned**. To be reminded that we think we **want fill-in-the-blank**. But we need **God**, and that God then provides for all of our needs too.

So we have to get to the place where we **trust God so much that we're OK that life doesn't always move at the speed we want it to**. Waiting for God shouldn't be like **waiting for the person in front of you** in the check out line. Sometimes **life dictates that we wait**. And while we wait, we hope in his word, not impatiently, annoyed. Rather, trusting, confident that our God is listening, acting, moving on our behalf.

Many of us feel like **we've tried waiting, and we're tired of it**.

G.K

We feel like **we've tried hoping in his word, and we're done**. One of my favorite **all-time quotes** comes from G.K. Chesterton: Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried. Waiting for God is **difficult** and it sometimes makes us want to **quit**. I heard a quote from a **pastor who says**: “Believing isn't the hard part. Waiting on God is.”

Which is a good sign that this is what God wants from us.

If you think about it, a lot of the **spiritual disciplines** have to do with waiting.

- When we fast, we wait to eat. We say; more than food, God, I want you.
- When we pray, we are stopping our routines and waiting while we both talk and listen to God.
- When we practice solitude and silence, we are waiting to talk and waiting to speak to other people before we speak to God.

- When we practice giving, we're giving of our firstfruits and waiting to see how God will provide for what you've given up.

Something important is growing inside of us when we wait for God.

ACTS

Think about the **early disciples** after Jesus rises from the dead. Jesus tells them as **reported** in the beginning of Acts to “wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” They’ve just seen their Lord die and rise from the dead, they’ve heard his teaching for 40 days, then he tells them to **wait**. And he **ascends to heaven**. They can all **believe**, because they’ve seen a **miracle**. Now they have to **wait**. Imagine what they’re **thinking**. Is he crazy? We’re just supposed to **wait**? All sorts of things could have happened at that point. They could have decided they’ve seen enough and it’s time to **take this act on the road**. Hold an evangelistic **crusade**, or **any number of things**.

They had to be thinking: **did we hear him right**? We’re just supposed to...**wait**? So what do they do? It says that they “all joined together constantly in prayer.” They **listened**, they **prayed**, and they **waited**. And we know what happened next. **Pentecost**, the Holy Spirit comes, and the **church takes off**.

WHY WAIT?

So **why** do we wait, then? Why has God **ordered the universe** such that he wants us to **wait** for him, and to **hope** in his word?

The psalmist actually answers that question, in verse 7. He tells Israel to put their hope in God. **Why**?

The **NIV** says “with the Lord is unfailing love” and a lot of the translations struggle to really capture it. The **best translation** I read was in a **commentary** that says “for Yahweh possesses the quality of loyal love.”

In other words: You should wait on God **because He will not let you down**. He will come **through**. It may not look like you wanted it to look, and it may take longer than you wanted it to take, but He is **worthy** of your hope. He’s got it.

In his book *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson writes about his job as a **night watchman** in NYC. He worked from 10pm to 6am, and he said there were a lot of colorful characters that would come in and out but he said the reason he didn’t have to worry is that someone else was taking care of the building.

Here’s what he says:

“The people who employed me thought it was worth several dollars an hour for me to wait through the night and watch for the morning. But I never did anything, never constructed anything, never made anything happen. I waited and watched. I hoped. If I had not known that there were others in charge of the building, I might not have been content to just be a watchman and collect my pay. If I were not confident that the building had an owner who cared about it, if I did not know that there was a building engineer who kept it in good order and repair, if I did not know that there were hundreds of people in the building who were going about their work everyday quite capably—if I

had not known these things, I might not have been so relaxed in making idle gossip with [colorful characters who wandered through]. Nor would the psalmist have been content to be a watchman if he were not sure of God. The psalmist's and the Christian's waiting and watching[—that is, hoping—]is based on the conviction that God is actively involved in his creation and vigorously at work in redemption.”

What I needed to hear someone say in early Covid that I think I'm learning more and more is this: **you are not in charge**. God doesn't need you to be in charge. He's got it taken care of. You can **relax** and let Him go ahead and be God. Don't just wait for good news from the television or your phone. Wait on God. Hope in his word.

And it's for **all parts of our day**—when we're **spending time with God**, doing things that are overtly **spiritual**, but also for when we're getting our emissions test done. We can wait. We don't have to win. We don't have to be in a hurry. We can wait. And trust in God's loyal love.

And as we turn our attention to the **communion** elements, we remember that night where Jesus was to experience the **betrayal** of one of his closest friends. And instead of **fighting** it or **running away**, he trusted in **God**.

He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to his disciples and said: Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup saying “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in remembrance of me.” Would you pray with me?

And so Lord Jesus, we come to you, desiring to trust in you more each day. Waiting for you, more than the watchmen wait for the morning. Amen.