

“WISDOM FOR WAITING.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for Sermon: Proverbs 3:5-7; 8:34; 14:29; 16:9, 32; 19:2; 20:22

Introduction.

Let's conduct a scientific survey, raise your hand if you like waiting?
Waiting rooms, long lines at Costco, border crossing, airports, traffic jams.

Hospital ER waiting rooms are a nightmare. ER time is much slower than real time. Hospital room days are like 48 hours.

We don't like waiting. Americans are the only people who drum our fingers waiting for the microwave. The agony of waiting.

We want two-day shipping, on-demand everything.

Fast food is no longer fast enough, now we order ahead.

Instant coffee is too slow, now there is Keurig.

Have you ever paid extra for a fast pass at Disney World or Disneyland?

I have a Nexus card that lets me use the TSA Pre-check line. It is like pure gold.

When we went to the Vancouver airport to pick up Reed and Jenea, we got away a few minutes later than I wanted to. The Nexus lane had four cars ahead of me and the one in the booth was just sitting there, for like two minutes. I was annoyed, it is supposed to take like 15 seconds.

I admit it, I don't like waiting, I will expend a considerable amount of energy to avoid waiting. My sin in this area is no secret to my wife, my kids, my siblings and some strangers who got in my way or in line in front of me.

Waiting is the common experience for all of humanity. Every man, woman and child on this planet has countless experiences of waiting and sometimes long periods of waiting.

Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for a child. Job suffered waited on the Lord. King David waited. The people of Israel waited. 40 years in the wilderness, 70 years in exile, 400 years in slavery. We have been waiting for the Lord's return for 2000 years.

Everyone is waiting. We spend a lot of our lives waiting, in traffic, at stop lights, in store checkout lines, for doctor's appointments and test results, for packages to arrive, and if you are a kid you are waiting for Christmas.

We are not alone in creation when it comes to waiting. All creation groans in spiritual waiting.

Romans 8:19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

Impatience.

Let's start by looking under the hood at our impatience. What is it, where does it come from, why does it sneak up and bite us so often?

"If it wasn't for impatience, I would have no patience at all!"

First I have to ask us if we even care about our impatience. It is a sin we very often dismiss because we say it isn't our fault, it is someone else's fault, or something else. "I am not an impatient person, they did something to make me impatient."

Listen to God's Word.

James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

Nothing outside of us makes us impatient. The same thing we said about our anger, we must also say about our impatience, our hasty temper. Nothing outside of us makes us impatient.

What are these passions at war inside of us? They are our desires, our appetites, our wants and needs, our pride, our selfishness, our desire for control.

We must let go of the lie that our impatience is caused by someone else or something else outside of ourselves. It is not outside of us, it is in our heart. That is the first reality we have to come to grips with and get honest about.

Stop pointing the finger. Stop blaming or accusing someone or something else. Stop playing the victim, stop being defensive. Stop making excuses like:

“I was worn out after a long day. I was super busy and stressed. I was distracted. The kids were being extra difficult. My spouse was short or cold or harsh again. I am carrying a lot extra at work right now. My truck wouldn’t start. I didn’t get enough sleep last night.”

Excuses. Those things don’t make me sin, those things expose the sin that is already in my heart. Our impatience is always our choice.

If you make any of those excuses, you are covering up the true source and you will not get real victory over your impatience.

My impatience is my selfishness, it’s seeking my happiness, my desires before others. Impatience can be as small as a long line at Safeway, a slow driver on the Hannagan, or as big as a disease or a debilitating handicap. It is as small as an interruption to the way you planned your day, to as huge as an interruption in the way you planned your life.

My impatience is pride, the expectation things should go my way and not impede my trying to be in control. Impatience is the passion we have to be served, to be in control, to be obeyed—to be like God.

Impatience is the name of that temper tantrum child inside of me wanting my way, what I want when I want it, and heaven help you if you get in my way. Again and again Proverbs tell us of the ignorance and folly of those who are hasty in their words and actions.

Impatience is lack of love or concern for others, I Corinthians 13 says love is patient.

Impatience is resisting the Holy Spirit because the fruit of the Holy Spirit in us is patience.

Impatience is disbelief, lack of trust in God.

In fact, impatience is really directed at God. In my arrogance, God is not doing things the way I think they should be done, but I take it out on others, which is why impatience often looks a lot like anger. I am trying to be god over my life and circumstances and it doesn't work.

“We don't get to decide how much traffic there will be. We don't get to decide whether our kids will cooperate at any given moment. We don't get to decide when we'll get sick, or what disease will afflict us, or when an appliance will fail, or how often interruptions will come. God's plans for us are famous for upending our plans for ourselves” (Marshall Segal).

The battle against impatience is a daily and lifelong battle. It is a weary, unceasing wrestling with our souls all our days. A city might be mastered/conquered in a day, our impatience and pride are mastered over lifetime.

OK, enough looking under the hood. I hope I have convinced all of us this is a real and serious sin and we all have it and it is in our hearts. So now what? Where is our hope and help?

Wisdom for patiently waiting.

As nothing outside of us makes us impatient, the reverse is true for our help. Nothing inside of us by doing better and trying harder will make us better or more patient.

What is patience and waiting ultimately an expression of?

Waiting is grounded in the Gospel, in trusting in God with all our heart in all our circumstances. The foundation of waiting patiently is the sovereign goodness of God.

Proverbs 3:5-8 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Learning to wait and be patient doesn't come from inside you. It is not a personality trait you are born with. Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, it grows through His sanctifying work in us.

What does "do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him" mean?

It means by faith acknowledging God sees what we cannot see, knows what we do not know, and understands what we cannot understand, and humbly accepting He knows what He is doing and why He is doing it.

At any given moment God is always doing ten thousand things in our life, and we are not aware of nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-five of them. Anytime we think we know what is best or right or the right timing, we don't have any clue what God is doing.

God is always actively working forming and shaping and molding our character, our faith, our hearts. Nothing is empty or purposeless or accidental with God, including long lines, traffic, breakdowns, delays, detours, inconveniences, unmet expectations, accidents and all the other stuff of everyday life that is apart of God's wisdom and will and timing.

Humility accepts our limitations and God's greatness and goodness. Patience grows out of humility. The humble are patient toward God and the patience spills over into patience toward others.

Last week we said the foundation to resisting peer pressure is our firm identity in Christ, so firm we don't have to depend on the acceptance or approval of others. The foundation of waiting patiently is the sovereignty and goodness of God.

A deep-rooted confidence in the providence of God, helps us be patient in the most inexplicable and hard and confusing circumstances of life, to trust in His absolute control in my life.

God's providence gives me patience confidence the Lord is not absent or indifferent while I wait.

Ummels, patience and confidence in the sovereign goodness of God in the hard providences of God.

God's providence gives patience its foundation. I can wait because the Lord is not absent or indifferent while I wait.

Waiting is an expression of faith. I trust God's wisdom even when I cannot see His purposes.

Christ is our supreme model as He patiently entrusted Himself to His Father and endured suffering without taking matters into His own hands.

Christ's work on the cross assures us of God's love. We do not have to anxiously try to manipulate circumstances and people to get our way.

Waiting is ultimately an issue of trust rather than simply an issue of time. God is way more interested in changing our hearts and maturing our faith than our time line.

Psalms 25:4-5 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
5 Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Proverbs 8:34 Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.

We should never use urgency as an excuse to ignore God's wisdom. This is the positive to the negative in Proverbs 19:2 that warns acting hastily without knowledge is not good.

The first act of patient waiting is prayer. Prayer is not the only thing we should do, but it is the very first thing we should do. Prayer is that deep breath that defeats impatience.

When we work, we work. When we pray, God works. God works for those who wait for Him.

Isaiah 64:4 No eye has seen a God besides you, who acts (works) for those who wait for him.

We think of ourselves as working for God, serving God. But before we do that, God first works for us who wait for Him. Not just meeting needs, but doing everything for the good of those who wait for Him. And we wait by

first of all praying, before trying to figure out what to do. Sometimes you may only have time to whisper a quick silent prayer, but pray.

All the spiritual disciplines require waiting, which is why we aren't very good at them.

Scripture reading, meditation, prayer, fasting, worship, hearing the Word of God preached and taught are the gates of wisdom and they all give wisdom to all for how to wait patiently.

Along with prayer and Scripture and Christ's Spirit in us, we have another tool in the Gospel.

Proverbs 28:13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Confess and repent and seek forgiveness from those you have been impatient with, spouse, kids, friends, boyfriend, girlfriend. Don't excuse or tolerate your impatience. Don't lie about it. Call it out. Call it what it is and repent of it and ask for the blood of Jesus to cover it and for the power of the Holy Spirit to kill it and give you what you need to gain victory over it.

Remember Paul's testimony:

I Timothy 1:16 I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display *his perfect patience* as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Fix your eyes on Jesus who with patience endured the cross because of the joy set before Him.

Turn to God and to our Savior who have perfect patience.

There is one thing worse than waiting of the Lord, and that is wishing you had.

May we increasingly live coram deo, with a clearer sense that we are in the presence of God, that all we say and do is known by God, and is directed by the Lord for His wisdom and will and glory.

Psalm 40:1-3 I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Prayer:

God of all waiting, teach us to embody patience, never rushing into action without your signal.

You have created a world built on patience; nature and the seasons follow their rhythms without haste. Help us learn from this design. Forgive us when we are impatient for the umpteenth time. Remind us of your unending patience toward us sinners. Strengthened us with your power, for all endurance and patience with joy. When our hearts are weary from waiting, remind us that we do not wait alone for Christ dwells in us. Amen.