

Waiting for God

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...

In our reading this morning from the book of Lamentations (Chapter 3, verse 25) it says, *"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" ...*

That passage really lived with me this week while I was away (and thinking about our renovations) – especially where it says, *"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him' ...*

I love that verse – and as I was thinking about what it's like to wait on God I came across an article written by Shauna Niequist (who also wrote a book titled, 'Cold Tangerines')... in the article she writes these words (about what it's like to wait)... She says,

"Sometimes I personally think I have always, in some ways, been waiting... perhaps waiting for God to let me become something new, or waiting to become that person I always thought I was on the verge of becoming, or waiting for that life I thought I would have... and in my head, I was always just one step away... one step away from the moment - when life would really begin" ...

But with all of the waiting that we do in life, here I am (and here you are)... and as life keeps on passing us by, day by day, (I think Shauna Niequist's words hold some truth) that many of us are still waiting for life to start (or might I say in light of what we went through last year with the Pandemic) – waiting for life to resume... waiting for that time, that person, that event – to come to us (so that life can finally begin)... or for some – begin again...

And maybe that's why we all love stories that have a 'Big Moment' – whether it be about the game, or the performance, or the wedding day, or the record deal – where the focus centers on a key event that changes everything... and perhaps that's how some of us have envisioned life is supposed to be (haven't we?) – the big moment when something will change everything and grab us out of the waiting game - and into the happy ending (we're all hoping for)...

But, I think it was John Lennon who once said, *"Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans"* ... and what he meant, is that life is happening right now... That **today is** your big moment... Moments, really... and the life you've been waiting for is happening all around you (right now – in this place – or wherever you are - as you listen to this message from afar)...

And as Barbara Brown Taylor once said, *"the scene unfolding right outside your window is worth more than the most beautiful painting, and the crackers and peanut butter that you're having for lunch on the coffee table are as profound, in their own way, as the Last Supper... This is it... This is life in all its glory, swirling and unfolding around us, disguised as pedantic, pedestrian non-events... But pull off the mask and you will find your life, waiting to be made, chosen, woven, crafted" ...*

She continues, *"You are more than dust and bones.
You are spirit and power and made in the image of God.
And what's more?... you have been given – Today"*

And then continues, **"And how great is His faithfulness?"** (as you wait in the Lord)...

So let me ask you a question this morning, "What are you waiting for from God?" ... What are you waiting for?... and what is supposed to happen before your life can begin?...

I think if you asked me that question 20 years ago I would have told you that "I am waiting for God to send me to a large mega-church somewhere in the United States that has 5 services, 10 pastors on staff, an international television program on Sunday morning, and a private jet so that I could preach around the world" ... I mean, you might as well dream big!...

And I'll be honest with you – when I first arrived in Lavallette I never thought I'd stay here for very long... because in my mind, I believed that God had something bigger in store for me...

But that's the funny thing about waiting for God in our lives... sometimes when we think that our day will never come, or our moment has not arrived, or our

purpose for living has yet to be found – we discover that it's already been here all along... and although I waited quite some time for God to bring me to what I believed to be the Promised Land – I can honestly say right now (as I serve this congregation) that *'God already has'...*

and I say that, because the last 19 years of serving this church have been some of the best years of my life... and in that time, I have met some of the most beautiful, faithful, loving people in the world because of this church... and it's because of this church that I believe not only in the power of God but also in miracles...

And I realize now – that while I thought I was waiting on God - God was actually waiting for me to see it...

You know, a few months before she passed away, I spoke with Evvy Stratton about my time at Faith (and we remembered so many of the things we went through together)...

And during that conversation she asked me to tell her what I believed to be an accomplishment – and I told her that I was proud of the time we did the building addition, or managed our way through Super Storm Sandy (basically doing all of the renovations ourselves with little or no money to speak of)... how we continued to gather so many new members through the years, found our way on Youtube with weekly videos (thanks to my daughter, Erin) and FB Live during the Pandemic, how we had started our most recent renovations – grew our ministries – and continue still to be a very generous congregation (through the most difficult of times)...

But what has touched me the most through the years (what has made me proud and has inspired me to live out my faith more and more everyday) is not what I've done – but what I've watched you do in your own lives (while you waited on God - for your own answer, or for a cure, or for something to change)... your faith is what has inspired me...

And although there are many stories that I can share - I can think of Andrew Doles (who – while he was with us about 15 years ago – struggled with the diagnosis of

brain cancer)... of course, we all waited for God to deliver him, to heal him, to make him whole once again... and no one wanted him to die...

but I will always remember the attitude he kept as he waited on God for answers... he never felt sorry for himself, never stopped fighting the disease, he never cursed God, and he never stopped smiling (even in the worst of times)... he never let the disease steal away his joy...

and when I presided at his funeral I was told that the reason why Drew was so strong (even when his world was in limbo – and the answers never seemed to come) was not only because of his faith – but because he lived by a very simple motto... and that was, **“to live every day as a holiday and to enjoy every meal as a feast”** ...

Friends, the point I am trying to make this morning is that we are all waiting for something... something perhaps that only God can provide... perhaps only God can deliver us from...

but what I want you to see is that faith is not found when the answer comes, or the pain goes away, or when the dark clouds vanish... instead, having faith in God is found today, in the moment, where you find yourself alive right now, in every breath that you breathe... and in believing that *‘God is always faithful’* – even as you wait...

for *‘Great is His faithfulness’*...

I want to close with something a Jewish friend shared with me a while back (that touches upon the idea of keeping the faith while we wait on God)... he told a story about a group of Jews during the Second World War who were hiding in the city of Cologne, Germany for fear of being caught by the Nazis... and as they waited some grew tired and wondered why God didn’t save them... others wondered if God was angry with them... a few even denounced their faith altogether...

And to keep a long story short - a short prayer was found scribbled on the wall by one of the Jews who continued to wait on God in faith... it read:

I believe in the sun even when it is not shining;

I believe in love even when I cannot feel it;

And I believe in God even when He is silent...

Let that be our own prayer – in our own waiting – if only for today... and know that God has not forgotten you, He has not abandoned you, but is with you every step of the way...

For Great is His Faithfulness...

May the love of God which surpasses all understanding guard and protect your heart... May His joy always fill your heart... and May His mercies come to you anew morning by morning...

In Jesus name we pray!

Amen!