

**March 29, 2020 Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**“What Are You Waiting For?”**  
**Psalm 130**  
**Pastor Barnes**

The patience of God be in your hearts. The love of God keep your heart strong. God’s grace keep you moving ahead called by Him to places not always known.

We continue this Lenten season reflecting upon the Psalms. A great discipline for me and maybe a new adventure for you!

Today, our focus is on Psalm 130

Did you notice that in the short space of verses 5-7 the word “wait” is used 4 times!

And the psalm opens by saying, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.” (prayers)

This prayer is one of God listening and responding and WE, waiting.

It would seem like an appropriate time to speak of “WAITING.”

With this COVID-19 anxieties build and there is no definite end....so we WAIT.

It is hard, isn’t it? ...without some definitive direction or deigning to understand this diseases effect on people, old and young...

So it is hard to find comfort. Difficult to find patience.

It causes for some, to live in crisis rather than clinging to our God who acts in love.

Psalm 130 resounds with the idea that God DOES Hear, God does Act and God does Redeem.

Psalm 130 has inspired some of the greatest music and other literature over the years for good reason.

It Begins: Out of the Depths I Cry to You!

This Strikes a chord in our hearts...

Used as a Penitential Psalm...

Pleading for God to listen and entreating God for forgiveness.

So it opens with “hear my voice!”

The psalmist calls out to God from the depths of human anguish in EXPECTATION -

That God hears and that God cares, because of who God is: The Helper.

Understand that the psalmist’s cry does not seem to arise from any sense of abandonment, but from Confidence and TRUST that God is a God who listens and who not only listens but helps...(vs. 5)

Do you feel this...as we move through this time of virus fears?

IN your WORD is my hope...it says.

I am not a good “waiter.” Especially when there is no definite “end.” My Mother loved to take her time when we would go out to eat. Slowly cutting each piece and carefully enjoying her meal. We three boys and dad, would long be finished and fidgeting around the table. Just when we thought she was finished and we were scooting to the end of the table. Mom would say....”I think I will have a cup of tea!” Argh! The end we thought we saw, was only a prelude to the next step.

Understand that the writer of Psalm 130 might be pleading with God to “be attentive to my voice.” BUT there was trust and hope that God was listening.

Even when the end may not be the “end” you expected.

I think of several Biblical stories:

At age 75 Abram called from his home where he was retired, wealthy and settled.....to go to a place that I will show you, says God.

Not details, yet, just go.

OR I think of the 10 Bridesmaids waiting for the groom to appear.

Oil in their lamps...but only 5 understood that waiting and patience might be a longer stint than expected.

The other 5 bridesmaids, wanted their expectation of “waiting” to be on THEIR time schedule

They had only just enough oil!

Any waiting can be anxiety producing...can we be faithful even in difficult times?

There is a secular word that we often use: Loyalty.

Loyalty is easy when things are going smoothly, or when the outcome is expected and on time....

John Westfall a Presbyterian minister wrote a book entitled: “Coloring Outside the Lines”. He wrote: “We are people who divide our loyalties.

As the pressure of everyday living mounts, we find ourselves stretched to the limits.

The incessant clamoring of the people and constant demands for our time and attention lead us to lose sight of what is most important.

Each of us has been called to have a relationship with God, to put Christ first in our lives.

The Bible is filled with challenges to be undivided in our loyalty,

BUT, it is not easy to live that way on a daily basis.

Commitment is a two way street.

Like Abram...leave your safe and expansive life and I will be your God.

Abram’s call is our call...

To walk by faith, trusting God, when we don’t know the final outcome.

It is to WALK while WAITING.

Trusting God when we don’t know the final outcome, even when a virus spreads through our world. We are always safely held as a sheep in the fold.

IN Exodus 20 the first of the Ten Commandments calls us to undivided loyalty: “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Joshua 24 gives us the challenge just like the Hebrew people as they were about to enter the promised land:

“Fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness;

Put away the gods your fathers served and instead serve the Lord.

If you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve,

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Many people think that our loyalties are determined in the “Important” moments of life. We look for the BIG events that may alter our lives.

However, Very FEW of our most significant experiences happen in the big moments!

More likely, we are shaped by the LITTLE things....

The small commitments and actions, even those events that sneak up on us unexpectedly.

We usually don’t recognize their significance at the time,

But in hindsight we realize their importance.

I remember vividly my parents had two sayings that drove me nuts!

(Remember, I am not a good waiter!)

They would say: “We’ll see.” In response to something I wanted to happen “now.”

Or “Let’s just WAIT and see.” Oh, the agony of waiting and seeing! But how long, O Lord!

IT might make me use the beginning of Psalm 130:

“Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord...(not seriously, but I was not always patient or understanding)

As a young boy, I just really didn’t understand the growth, faith and often unexpected revelations that “waiting” might bring.

This reminds me of the passage in Matthew just before the 10 bridesmaids...Matthew 4:42: “Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, He would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

I’m not worried about the final coming of Jesus...it will be a surprise to all of us!

But Psalm 130 reminds us of HOW to wait:

1. Seeking the Lord in prayer (supplications).
2. Living as forgiven children of God.
3. Placing the Word of God in our hearts of hope.
4. Standing upon the steadfast love of God.

This psalm is addressed to us (here is another translation):

“Israel (us), wait for the Lord!

Because faithful love is with the Lord;

Because great redemption is with our God!

He is the one who will redeem Israel from all its sin.” Ps. 130 7-8

From our Gospel today...”The raising of Lazarus”

Mary and Martha, facing the critical time of Lazarus sick unto death...

Didn’t do well with “waiting.” Each said the same to Jesus: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

True....and they understood that Jesus was the resurrection and life...but wanted not to wait...They wanted their brother alive in this place.

Through tears, the waiting came to an unexpected end with Jesus calling: “Lazarus come out!”

AS the “Body of Christ”....we come together in prayer and worship...(even as we have to pray “virtually” during this unexpected time of waiting!)

Praying both for the needs of now and the salvation that has saved us to share the joy of the kingdom.

Waiting may be part of both: needs and salvation...but we wait in hope and strength....

A final, I hope, light story to conclude:

When I was a young boy and my dad would take me fishing....

It was not so much casting “lures” but baiting with worms and watching bobbers.

Sometimes, you would watch for a long time and the bobber just drifted along the waves.

Other times, you could tell the fish were working on the worm as you waited to see the bobber finally be pulled beneath the water.

Then, dad yelling....”set the hook!” and “keep the slack out of the line!”

AS you pulled in another Blue Gill, usually not so big....but you were excited!

We have been caught up in the Love story of God through the Body and Blood of Jesus our Lord.

Whether we catch a lot of fish in this life or not.....God cares for you and me, no matter how much waiting.

It reminds me of the resurrection story. (a painting we have hanging in the Gathering Room)

After Jesus was crucified....Peter said: I’m going fishing! Who’s with me?

The disciples went and fished all night without catching any fish.

Jesus appeared on the shore with a charcoal fire going....and shouted...

Have you any fish?

Nope! Jesus said, well, cast on the other side!

After having waited all night....they did pull their nets in the boat and casted AGAIN....probably in the same place they had just earlier fished!

BUT now their nets were full of fish!

Peter knew and jumped in the water...swimming to shore.

We KNOW and are asked to jump in the water of life.

Waiting day to day for the cares and needs of this world.

But also waiting in joy for what we know to come....the joy of the kingdom.

Our nets, in faith, will always be full.

Psalm 130:5 “I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits; in your Word is my hope.”

Amen.