

Just You Wait

On this Mother's Day, I share with you a story about a young son and his mom.

A family is seated around the table as Sunday dinner is being served. When seven-year-old Logan receives his plate, he starts eating right away.

"Logan, wait until we say our prayer," his mother reminds him.

"I don't have to wait," the little boy replies.

"Of course you do," his mother insists. "We always say a prayer before eating at our house."

"That's at *our* house," Logan explains. "But this is Grandma's house and *she* knows how to cook."

Logan's in a hurry to feast on Grandma's good cooking. He just can't wait.

But there are times when waiting is the only option.

Some moms have been known to warn a misbehaving child: "Just wait till your father gets home!"

And you may remember how, in “My Fair Lady,” Eliza Doolittle sings: *Just you wait, ‘enry ‘iggins!*

People who have served in the military will tell you that they got used to having to *hurry up and wait*.

Back in the sixties, Diana Ross and the Supremes famously lamented that *you can’t hurry love. No, you just have to wait*.

But, no matter what it is you’re waiting for, waiting isn’t easy. Even in this twenty-first century, when so many things are supposed to be “instant” or at least “fast,” we spend a sizable chunk of our time waiting. Waiting in the checkout line. Waiting in traffic. Waiting for a flight. Waiting for payday. Waiting for a tax refund. Waiting for a child to be born. Waiting to see the doctor, and then waiting some more to get the test results. Waiting for a dear one to call or come home.

Waiting can be difficult. John Wesley knew something about waiting. He waited a long time to experience the assurance of faith; the assurance he believed every true Christian is supposed to receive. Lacking it, longing for it, Wesley struggled with sorrow and with a feeling of hopelessness. Until one evening, he went to a society meeting of believers on Aldersgate Street in London.

In his journal, Wesley wrote about what happened to him at that meeting. As he heard a description of “the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.”

That took place in the year seventeen thirty-eight, during May. And in *this* month of May, all these years later, we remember his Aldersgate experience. And we give thanks for our Methodist heritage and for John Wesley who waited for and received assurance.

We hear more about waiting in this Ascension Sunday account from Luke’s Gospel. The Risen One has appeared again to his followers. Even after his resurrection, he’s still teaching them, still helping them understand all that was written about him. Through many centuries, for an exceedingly long time, the chosen people have read the Hebrew Scriptures and have waited for those words to come to pass. They’ve waited for the Messiah, the Christ. The fulfillment of the Law, psalms, and prophets. This anointed One whose coming has been foretold is none other than Jesus himself. And he tells the eleven that they are witnesses to all that

was prophesied in Scripture. Witnesses to him! And to his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Jesus announces a new and life-changing vocation for them. Because they are the ones who have seen and heard, they will be the ones sent to go and tell the nations.

But Jesus has one more thing to say to them. It's his last instruction for them. So we know it must carry great significance. Just before his departure, Jesus tells his followers: *Stay here until you receive what's been promised. Wait!*

This is Jesus' final charge to his disciples. Are these words of his intended only for eleven particular first-century Galileans? Or are they for *all* of Jesus' followers? When Jesus says *wait*, could he be talking to you and me as well? In this time? In this place?

I think so. I think there are times in our lives when Christ asks us to wait. Do you think this could be one of those times?

Oh, maybe your wheels are starting to turn. Maybe you're thinking something like this:

We're supposed to wait? But we're not good at waiting. We're busy, active, on-the-go kind of people. We're not good at sitting still and doing nothing. What do we do while we wait?

My sisters and brothers, I think the first thing we do is exhale. Take a break from all our activity, all our hurrying, all our rushing. Slow down. Hit the pause button.

Be still and know that God is God. Enter into a deep communion that's more about listening than it is about speaking. A communion that's not so much about your plans and my plans as it is about turning ourselves over to *God's* plans.

The plans of the One who gives the peace that the world can't give. The peace that passes understanding. The peace that washes over you. Refreshes you. Soothes you. Calms your spirit. The peace of waiting creates an opening within, an openness that may not have been there before.

Waiting, somehow, opens us up to new possibilities. Waiting focuses more on looking ahead than it does on looking back. But that's not always easy, is it? Because what lies ahead may entail change. And we don't always do such a good job of embracing change, do we? The unfamiliar can make us anxious and uncomfortable. But change is certain. God is getting ready to do something new. And as people who bear the name of Christ, we have been called to be a part of this new thing that God is doing!

So while we wait, we're leaning forward with great anticipation and expectancy into the future that God is preparing even now. Even in our own time.

Even in today's world—the same world into which Jesus came and from which he has ascended. After Jesus ascends, the lives of the eleven continue. After the ascension, what do these disciples do? What do they do while they're waiting? When Luke answers this question, I think he wants us to understand that Jesus' first disciples offer us a model for what *we* are to do.

Here at the very end of the Gospel, Luke tells us that while these followers wait, they begin by worshiping the Christ.

Jesus has been their earthly companion. With him, they've shared meals and fellowship and journeys. Jesus has walked with them as their friend and their teacher. But now, the ascended Christ is One they worship. And One *we* worship in the same way. Falling silent in reverence, in awe, in adoration. Praying as he has taught his disciples to pray. Confessing faith. Lifting voices in songs of praise and thanksgiving. Our worship is patterned after the worship of these eleven.

Who respond to God's grace with glad and grateful hearts. With joy. As those first disciples wait, they rejoice—and so do we!

Christ has been raised from the dead! To be followers of Jesus Christ is to be an Easter people—a people who have heard the great good news of the resurrection. To be a Christian is to be joy-filled and to let your joy overflow and spill out of you. For death has been defeated! God has had, and does have, and will have the last word. And it is good!

So while we wait, we gather in God's house—just as those long-ago followers did. We gather not as isolated individuals, but as community. And continually, we bless the One who has blessed us so amazingly and so abundantly. You and I have been blessed to be a blessing! To bless God and to bless every child of God.

God who has promised the Spirit that Christ is sending. The One who will clothe you with power from on high—the only true power. God who has promised is faithful, and has spoken through the prophet Isaiah, assuring that *those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.*

You've been asked to wait for the Lord. So that you might be strengthened. So that you might be equipped with all you need for ministry and mission. So that you might be enabled to do what Christ has commissioned each one of his followers to do: to go

forth and proclaim repentance and forgiveness in his name to all people.

When you go, you have the certitude that God in Christ Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit will go before you. And that's worth waiting for!

Still, we wonder: *Lord, how long?* You—and I—were not born with patience. But know that—even today—the Spirit is, in your innermost places, planting seeds. Seeds that are growing in you and causing you to bear the fruit of patience.

So that you trust the One in whose good time all that you're waiting for will be accomplished. The time is not for you and me to know. The fulfillment of promise comes not in accordance with our timetables—but in God's perfect time.

God's own Son walked the earth at one particular time and in one particular place. But on this Ascension Sunday, we celebrate. For Christ is risen and exalted! And he reigns in glory, far above all rule and authority, above every power and dominion. For all time! He reigns over this age and over the age to come. Jesus Christ is Lord of time. Just wait and see!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.