

Pastor Joe Polzin
Isaiah 25:6-9
“We Are People Who Wait”
Year A – Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
October 15, 2017

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s people, we, are people who wait. In our Old Testament reading, we hear from Isaiah about the people of God waiting for the day of His salvation: “It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation’” (Isaiah 25:9). We are to be people who wait.

The problem is, and I don’t know if you’ve noticed this, but we as a society aren’t too good at waiting. Some people have even lamented that as a culture, we’ve lost the “art of waiting.” Part of it, I think is generational. Someone recently described what it was like to be raised in the Baby Boomer generation. There were just so many people all the time, you would often have to wait for things: at banks, grocery stores, movie theaters... you name it, you probably expected to stand in a line to get it.

Nowadays, and with the advent of the internet culture, the younger generations today are used to things much more immediately. But no matter your age, I think we can all see how we’ve grown accustomed to, and really like, having things with less waiting: immediate communication with cell phones, email, video calls, and text messages. Online services like banking, renewing your license, and even ordering your groceries before you get to the store. Brick-and-mortar stores are closing one after the other because people are saying, “Well, I can get the same things online, for a better price, with two-day shipping... and no waiting!”

And this mindset of waiting, or the lack thereof, is influenced by the rapid rate of change in technology and societal values in our world today. And it begins to alter how we consider other things in our world today; things such as our expectations of businesses, sports teams, education, politics... even road construction! If we don’t get immediate results, then something must be wrong, and it must be changed. In a world that changes by the minute, we’ve seem to have lost the ability to envision or plan anything long-term, much less be ready to wait for whatever that is.

So then, when it comes to waiting on God, and on things of faith... how well do we do? How is it when we’re waiting for the results of a medical test? Or waiting to see how a treatment plan is going to work for my long-term health? Waiting to see when I’m going to get a job that can pay the bills? Waiting to see if or when my children or grandchildren will come back to church? Waiting to see if I’ll ever talk to this family member or friend again? Waiting to see what the remainder of my life will hold, however long it might be?

“Waiting,” as the recently passed song-writer, Tom Petty says, “is the hardest part.” And for a Christian, waiting, especially when we feel we’re waiting on God, is difficult because we know who’s in control of all things, and yet we aren’t always shown the plan. What’s more, we’re waiting in a fallen and imperfect world, full of human sin, which means our time of waiting is full of struggles and hardships and pain, and even, eventually death.

That’s really the crux of it: sin, sin which leads to pain and death. Our sin, which makes waiting so challenging. Sin is what has separated us from God, and set in motion the need for

God to save us. And what we find, however, is that our God has fully engaged with that plan, His plan, to do just that.

In fact, Isaiah is speaking to a people who was in a time of waiting. Their sin had brought spiritual and physical death upon their nation, and they found themselves waiting for the day when they might be saved. And God promised to do so. A day would come when a Messiah would bring salvation to them. And to assure them of this salvation, Isaiah put into words a picture of what that day would look like:

“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces” (25:6-8).

This description of God providing a banquet is synonymous with salvation. And what did we see when Israel’s Savior, Jesus Christ, arrived? We saw the one who bring living water, the bread of life, and the true vine. The table was set. And by his life he showed the way to the Father, by his death he destroyed the power that sin had over us, and by his resurrection he swallowed up the veil of death that covered us. Jesus has delivered our salvation. He has given us the assurance that we possess his salvation in the present, and the assurance that when he comes again we will fully experience it in the life of the world to come.

And so now we eagerly wait for his second coming, not in impatience or uncertainty, but in hope. Hope that we know what is now is not all, and what is to come will far surpass anything we could possibly imagine.

And yet, for now, we wait. We are people who wait. That future is not fully here. We are saved, but for a time, we still suffer the consequences of sin, suffering and death. Our lives aren’t perfect, and they do come to an end. But thanks be to God, He has not left us without promise and a clear expectation of what’s to come. Just as Isaiah’s Word from God comforted God’s people as they awaited the Savior’s first coming, so does God’s Word comfort us as we await the Savior’s second coming.

And when he comes, not in meekness and humility, but this time in power and glory, and with mercy and grace for all who believe, we will see our salvation, no longer hidden, but in full. Until that day, we rely on God’s Word and Sacraments, which give us faith and strength to survive this time of waiting.

It’s no coincidence that the new heavens and new earth are described as a feast, as we heard in our readings today. Because where does God deliver to us pardon, peace, and strength until we experience that feast in full? The feast of His Sacrament, a foretaste, a glimpse, of the feast to come. And where do we receive the correct garment for that meal? (cf. Matthew 22:11-12) In Baptism, where the robe of Christ’s righteousness covered all our sin, enabling us to stand before God in the day of our salvation, not with fear, but with great joy and anticipation.

God’s people are people who wait. And because of Christ, we wait and hope for what’s to come, when we know we will one day say, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation...” forever and ever. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.