

Wait for the Lord

Lenten Midweek #4 – 03/23/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Genesis 41:9-16, 25-44 Pastor Keith Besel

Introduction

- ✘ Well, believe it or not, we are just about at the midpoint of our Lenten journey with Joseph. For the past few Wednesdays, we've hopped, skipped, and jumped our way through the trials and travails of Joseph.
 - ➔ But the downside of trying to compress Joseph's life story into a neat seven-part sermon series is that everything gets reduced down to nothing-more than a speedy series of events. It's hard to see all of the connections when time gets crunched so that Joseph seems to move quickly and seamlessly from tragedy to triumph.
 - ➔ It appears that he has a few really bad days in the cistern and then down in the dungeon but then the really good days come and he's up, like that (snap)! On top of that, the fact that most of us know the story and how it ends makes Joseph's tough times that much easier to swallow.

I. Joseph Waited in Faith

- ✘ But what we miss by jumping through Joseph's life like this is a good understanding of just how long he had to wait for the Lord to act; how long he languished in an Egyptian dungeon with nothing and no one to give him hope and encouragement.
 - ➔ Our Reading tonight ends after Joseph has successfully interpreted Pharaoh's dreams about fat cows and skinny cows. We see that Joseph has proposed a plan to save the world from famine, and just like that (snap) he becomes the highest-ranking official in the Egyptian empire.
 - ➔ Good news, right? But again, how much time had elapsed since Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. It's only been a few weeks for you and me, but for Joseph that was thirteen years earlier (Gen. 37:2; 41:46). The brothers sold him at age 17, and he entered Pharaoh's service at the age of 30. And although we don't have an exact timeline for all that took place, Joseph certainly spent the largest majority of those thirteen years in prison.
- ✘ So tonight Joseph teaches us the virtue of waiting; waiting for the Lord in faith. Yes, Joseph is a living example in a lesson that so many of us need desperately to learn from the Lord; that is the fact that patient waiting is actually part and parcel of the Christian life.
 - ➔ The Bible is full of texts encouraging us to wait patiently. Psalm 130:5-6 says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, ... my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning". And the prophet Isaiah gives us the wonderful promise that "they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength ... with wings like eagles" (Is. 40:31). Paul reminds us in our Epistle Reading tonight that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).
 - ➔ So yes, we believers base our hope on *what will be*, not on the way that things appear right now. We look in faith upon what is ahead in Jesus while we walk – and we wait – in faith.
- ✘ Think for a moment about how long Joseph had to wait in prison. He spent the prime of his life rotting away behind bars – an innocent man among the criminals. It makes a person wonder if he was ever tempted to take matters into his own hands; to plot an escape or incite a riot or take advantage of the guards with whom he had curried favor.

II. We See Waiting as Weakness

- ✘ But there's no evidence or indication of any of that in the Bible. Instead Joseph just waited. He waited for the Lord and His deliverance.

- But this is not what we've been trained by our culture today to think of as a sign of strong character.
- Yet here it is, raised up in Scripture attached to a man with great integrity and faith. So I guess that means that waiting for the Lord is not a weakness. Instead it is shown to be a strength. Waiting for the Lord is not an expression of fear, but one of faith.
- ⊗ It's just that our sinful flesh doesn't see it that way, does it? No, more often we despise any and all forms of waiting. We cannot bear to wait.
 - Think about that, how well do you wait in the city when the freeway traffic just inches along? How well do you wait over here at the DMV or the doctor's office?
 - Of course, those things are really superficial, first-world problems – like when the Wi-Fi fails, or you can't get same-day shipping from Amazon. Bummer!
- ⊗ But what we're talking about tonight is an entirely different kind of waiting. This is a waiting that is designed by our gracious God for a very important purpose – to draw us into an even deeper faith and a greater hope. When you and I are assaulted by false accusations and persecution like Joseph was, rather than blowing a gasket in anger and impatience, we should instead wait patiently for the Lord.
 - When we deal with chronic illness or chronic pain, rather than whining about it, this is a time for us to wait patiently for the Lord. When temptation is about to entangle you – when your employer lets you go or your savings is drained away or loved ones leave the church and turn away from the Lord; when life overwhelms and you're just barely treading water – don't give up my beloved Christians. Instead trust in the Lord and wait ... just wait. Don't despair. Don't take matters into your own hands, but instead do place matters into the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. Wait for the Lord in the confidence of His love for you.
- ⊗ Don't do what Peter did. Instead learn from Peter what not to do. Remember, Peter had been so bold and brave when he pledged his loyalty to the Lord, saying "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death" (Lk. 22:33).
 - Yet at the first sign of trouble, he quickly distanced himself from Jesus. He saw the potential for danger to himself and he did a little double-talk to save his own skin: "I do not know Him," he said in Luke 22:57. As Jesus was led away to trial and torture; at the moment when Peter should have engaged in faithful waiting, what did he do? He denied Jesus three times.

III. Faithful Waiting is God's Gift

- ⊗ And before we hurt ourselves by pointing all of our accusatory fingers at Peter, we need to all admit that faithful waiting doesn't come naturally to any of us.
 - Instead it comes from God Himself. Unlike Joseph, we have God's inspired, written Word so that you and I know where things are ultimately headed. We know what God has in store for us.
- ⊗ In Joseph's wildest dreams, he could never have imagined he would one day be the most powerful man on the face of the earth – that he, with the help of God, would save the world from famine!
 - Everything Joseph did and had was a gift from the Lord – far more than he ever desired or deserved. And we know that too. We know that, for the sake of His dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord will also give us more than we deserve, and even more than we desire. We know that, one day, our waiting will come to an end – and that end will not disappoint us.
- ⊗ And none of it is our own doing. The source of our hope and confidence; the foundation of our faithful waiting, is all Jesus – 100%.

→ Like Joseph, Jesus was a true son of Israel. Like Joseph, Jesus sank into the depths and was raised up to new heights of power and authority. Like Joseph, Jesus worked a deliverance for the whole world; a deliverance not just from famine, but from the power of sin and death. 2 Corinthians 5:19 tells us that, “in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting [our] trespasses against [us]”.

✘ Jesus is God’s beloved Son, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. In Philippians, chapter two, we learn that Jesus made Himself nothing, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men and humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. He did it as an innocent man among us; among the criminals.

→ But now, God has exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

✘ Look, even today our lives unfold much like Joseph’s life – maybe not as quickly and seamlessly as Joseph’s; perhaps much slower and with a great deal of difficulty and tribulation. Either way, we children of God wait with faith and with confidence in our Savior. Why? because the foundation of faithful waiting is found in Jesus.

Conclusion

✘ And the benefit is that in that waiting, God then gives us the ability to trust in Him all of our days – through all of our burdens because we know that our sins are already paid for and our eternity is already won!

→ That means that heaven stands wide open before us as we wait. Like Joseph, for now we have good days and bad days, triumphs and tragedies. But we know how our story will end – and we know that the ending is a joyful one.

✘ I know, sometimes it seems like your living life in a dungeon; like it’s just dragging on without an end. But dear friends, like Joseph wait – wait for the Lord.

→ Martin Luther summarized this waiting by saying that in such times we should conclude, “I know that I have been baptized, that I have eaten the body and drunk the blood of the Son of God; that I have been absolved by divine authority; that all my sins have certainly been forgiven me, and that victory over the devil, death, and hell has been promised me. What more should I ask for? That is what Joseph concluded” (AE 7:132). Amen.