

Wait a moment.
(Pause for a time)

Waiting. It seems sometimes that all we do in life is wait. We wait in line at the market; We wait at the traffic light; We wait for the Advil to take effect; We wait for the commercial to be over; We wait for the shower to get warm; We wait for financing to come through; We wait to be heard; We wait for life to turn around; We wait for our son or daughter to get serious about life; We wait for the change...the change we just know is coming. We wait, we wait, we wait.

There are times when our waiting can be absolutely excruciating and we can hardly stand to wait another minute. I was in traffic on Minnesota Blvd. the other day, and I was stuck in the middle lane behind this green Subaru wagon, you know, the ones with all the bumper stickers stacked up on the back window - and this guy is going about 20 miles an hour. Every now and then he speeds up to about 30 and then quickly drops back to 20. At one point the guy just stops his car in the middle lane. Boom right there by Carrs supermarket. I look in my rearview mirror and I have cars stacked up in my lane behind me and the lanes on each side of me are full of vehicles all the way to Canada. I try to merge left. I try to merge right. I'm stuck. I just had to wait, and as it turns out, the guy in front of me was just talking on the phone!

But, there are also times when we wait, and time just seems to slip away, it escapes us, and we wonder, "How did things end so fast?" A couple of years ago we went back for what would be our last Thanksgiving with my father. The truth is, we knew that he was going to die, we didn't know when, but we knew it was soon. I don't know if I would have called it waiting at the time....but, that was sure a time when I was more than willing to wait a little longer.

Sometimes, waiting isn't such a bad thing.
Sometimes, waiting is a gift from God.

We wait on God. God makes us wait.
We see the world racing by us.
God sees this as essential to our spiritual life.

This morning in our Scripture the disciples are told to go and wait. We see in verse 4 & 5 that Jesus tells his disciples to wait for the gift that the Father has promised; Jesus tells

them that they will have to wait for just a few days and then they will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

What is it with God and all this waiting? Doesn't it seem that God is always making people wait? Why wait? God is fully in control, why can't God make things happen now? Why can't Jesus snap his fingers and "ta da" - the disciples receive the Holy Spirit?

Why wait? Because waiting is more about Jesus than it is about us.

This morning we start a study on the book of Acts. As many of you know the book of Acts was written by Luke, the same man who wrote the Gospel of Luke. It turns out that the content of the Gospel of Luke takes up exactly the amount of room that would be available on the typical scroll used in the day - In other words the Gospel of Luke ends because there is no more room for Luke to write, Luke literally runs out of room so he stops writing the Gospel of Luke. But, he has more to say and so here in the book of Acts, we see what scholars say is the next scroll Luke sits down to write on. The book of Acts is...part two of the Gospel of Luke.

I say this right up front, not because it is some great biblical trivia, but because it informs us of the purpose of the book of Acts, and this purpose gives us guidance in the practical application to our lives of what we read.

So, if we go back to the beginning of the Gospel of Luke 1:1-4, we read:

"1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. "

Verse 4, there is the key verse from the Gospel of Luke, "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Certainty. Certainty of what?

So that you can be absolutely certain that Jesus is very real. Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again. Luke is writing about the person of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of

Luke AND it follows that if the Gospel of Luke is about Jesus Christ, and the book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, then, the Book of Acts is also about Jesus Christ.

Here then is the first practical thing we learn from the book of Acts this morning: This book is about Jesus Christ, so when Jesus tells his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, the waiting isn't about the disciples and all the things they could be doing and all the things the disciples will be missing as they wait; The waiting is about Jesus Christ. When the disciples wait, they wait in connection with Jesus Christ. The waiting isn't about them, the waiting isn't about the disciples - the waiting is about Jesus.

When God has you wait, when God causes things to slow down or even stop in your life - keep in mind, this waiting you are going through is NOT about you - this waiting is about Jesus.

Look, the fact is, when you give your life over to Jesus Christ, your life no longer is about you. The very moment that you invite Jesus into your heart, you no longer serve your self, you now serve Jesus Christ.

Think about that. Meditate on that.

Do you know what the implications are for you in your life that your life is no longer about you?

The job that you have, the field of work that you have chosen - that work is not about you, that job is not about you, no, you are in your field, you are at your place of work, not for yourself, but for Jesus Christ. The implication of being successful at work is completely different if your work, even as a welder, your success at work is now completely different if your work is about Jesus Christ and not about you.

If I rise to the top of my field, if I accomplish all I am assigned to do, if I am number one in sales, number one in publishing, number one in results and so on - what good is it if it is just all about me? What does it profit me if I gain the whole world, and the name of Jesus suffers as a result? Are you under the impression that the decisions you make at work are somehow, someday, magically separate from your Christians life?

Don't make a serious mistake by thinking that only people who become missionaries fully give their lives over to the work of God. There are no part time Christians. You gave your life over to Jesus Christ - welcome to full time employment with Jesus Christ.

You know, maybe you are frustrated with life because you still think your life is about you. You still have the idea that your life revolves around you. You still have the idea that your life revolves around your needs, your hurts, your desires...but I'm sorry, as a Christian that just isn't how it is.

The sooner you figure this out, the sooner life will start to move forward.

You will notice, all throughout the book of Acts, that when the followers of Jesus suffer, they don't suffer because of who they are, they suffer because of who Jesus is. When the followers of Jesus are healed, when they receive great joy, when they are rescued, when they are persecuted - none of these things happen because of who they are - all of these things happen because of who Jesus is. When these men wait, they wait not because of who they are, or who they will become, or for any other reason. These men wait, because this is about Jesus, this is not about these men.

The book of Acts is all about Jesus Christ, it is not about the followers of Jesus Christ, for the followers of Jesus exist to serve Jesus, they live to serve Jesus. All they do points to Jesus, and not to themselves.

Perhaps, just perhaps, these things are happening in your life, these things that are driving you crazy, are not happening because of you; Perhaps, just perhaps, these things are happening in your life because of the person of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the events in your life aren't just about you, perhaps, these events are about Jesus Christ.

See, when God causes you to wait, it is not about you and your schedule, it is about you and your service to the one you promised your life to - Jesus Christ. The lives of the people in the early church were all about Jesus. Everything they did somehow pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of their life was clear - their life was about Jesus, and they didn't even need to read Rick Warren's, "The Purpose Driven Life" to know that.

OK, so when did this change? When did it become OK for us to think that life is about us? Is there a verse in the NT where we read, "This was how life was for people in the time of Jesus, but you don't have to live this way"? Does it say in the NT that after 100 years, or 1000 years or 2000 years, things will be different, and your life will be about you?

When the writers of the NT write for us, they write about how life is. It is pretty sobering to realize that we are expected to live like they lived; We are expected to be all about Jesus, and nothing less.

In the book of Acts we will see that the lives of these eleven men will be about Jesus; We will see that their lives are a practical example for us to follow; We will see how wonderful it is, that life is no longer about us, and we will see how wonderful it is that life is now about Jesus.

We see that Luke continues to write about the person of Jesus Christ and addresses the letter to Theophilus. Theophilus was a common name at the time meaning friend of God. It is not known who Theophilus was, most likely Theophilus is an ordinary man of the day, but it is apparent that Luke desires for him to fully know about who Jesus is.

We see here at the beginning of Acts that Jesus is continuing in his ministry on earth. Verse 3, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." Jesus is resurrected from the dead, and Jesus just continues on.

You have to think that the disciples expect Jesus to be with them from now on. Life is just regular everyday life like it was before. There in verse 4, Jesus is having a meal with them. Everyday stuff. When Jesus is right in front of us it is easy to say that our life is all about Jesus. So this time for the disciples is easy. They know that their enemies can't kill Jesus. They know that Jesus is all powerful because he has risen from the dead. They know that all they have to do is stick by the person of Jesus and everything will work out.

I delivered eggs one summer for an extra job. I had a huge white delivery van and I would load up with cases of eggs in Oakland and deliver them to small markets, omelet restaurants, bakeries, mini markets and a neighborhood co-op or two.

It was a fairly easy job, while I was in training. When I was in training the boss answered all the questions and handled all the complaints, I just drove and filled out orders. Then one morning, I was on my own.

It turns out, there are a ton of things that can go wrong with eggs. I would have business owners confront me with three cracked eggs out of the one thousand I delivered the week before. People would claim to have not received what they signed for. Restaurants owners

would have accidentally left their checkbook at home and the cash register would mysteriously be low on cash. In Berkley I was followed by a team of anti chicken egg protesters who would chant anti egg producer slogans and attempt to block my deliveries. At times they would lay down in my path so I would have to step over them. They even managed to block me in one day during a delivery. I called my boss for advice. He said, offer them each a case of eggs. Amazingly, he was right, I offered them each a case of eggs - their ideology changed, they took the eggs and went away - and were back the next week chanting their anti egg slogans at me.

The job was easy when the boss was there. Life is easy when Jesus is there eating right in front of you. Questions. Jesus will have the answers. Problems. Jesus will take care of them. Hassles. No one will bother us when Jesus is here with us.

But, then Jesus leaves.

First Jesus tells them to wait (verse 4) but then he leaves (verse 9). They will have to wait without Jesus.

Notice in verse 6 the disciples ask a question that seems a bit out of place. Acts 1:6, "So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'"

Jesus sakes them to wait for the Spirit, and they ask about the restoration of Israel. See, most Jews were familiar with the OT prophecies that spoke of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These prophecies that they were familiar with were in context of the restoration of Israel in the last days. So, it is natural for the men to think of the restoration of Israel when Jesus mentions the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When they hear the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they think the last days and the restoration of Israel. They think it is of the political rise of Israel that Jesus is talking about.

So in verse 7 & 8 Jesus reply is essentially, don't worry about things beyond your control and instead worry about what you have control over - being my witnesses. He is saying, worry about the here and now, don't worry about the last days.

This is not a new commission Jesus is giving them, it is a continuation of the commission of Israel. Jesus tells them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Now, most of the disciples call Galilee home, not Jerusalem. Jerusalem wasn't their home, it was where they were placed by God at the moment. So the disciples are to

start where God has placed them now. For us that means that we are to start with being a witness for Jesus in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. Wherever you are, that is where you are to be a witness for Jesus Christ.

Judea. Judea was the greater region. So the disciples are not to wait for people to come to them, they are to go out away from where they happen to be at the moment. God has each of us in a particular situation right now, but that will change, and when it does, you are expected to then continue to witness in your new circumstances.

Samaria. The Jews hated Samaria. They hated the place so much that they wouldn't even want to step into the territory. Many would even take extra time and expense to walk around the territory - just to avoid what they hated. The disciples were to take the Gospel to every place, even places they found they hated. For us, we are to be living for Jesus, where ever we are, there is not a place on this planet where we are not to live for Jesus Christ.

The ends of the earth. You know, Israel is almost on the exact opposite side of the earth from us here in Alaska. I really expect that Jesus was thinking of us here in Alaska when he made that statement. We are the ends of the earth to an Israeli. Praise God for obedient people who brought the Gospel here to the ends of the earth.

Then Jesus is taken up - proof of his glory.

So, there they all stand, looking up. Why are they looking up? They think Jesus will be back any minute. Jesus has been there for every question, for every problem and for every hassle. How can they continue on without Jesus?

It takes a couple of angels to shake them out of their world. Yes, Jesus is gone. Now you must wait.

So, now wait a minute. If this book is about Jesus Christ, then how come Jesus leaves in the first chapter? Jesus is gone, but Jesus is always with us.

God is very powerful and God could operate independently from any humans to accomplish his will, but He doesn't, God chooses to work through people. God accomplishes His purpose through His people. We will see that God accomplishes work through people by the power of the Holy Spirit - but we will have to wait for that.

For now let me wrap this up with this thought about your life, and the call of the Lord Jesus upon you.

Since it is true that God accomplishes His purpose through His people, then it follows that God has chosen each Christian, each believer to work through. THAT means God has chosen YOU as a believer to accomplish His purpose.

How astounding is that? You, of all people have been chosen to accomplish His purpose.

I'm sure there are more qualified, more capable, and more effective people out there - but God chose you, and God chose me.

After the realization settles in that God has really chosen each one of us to work through, the realization of practical application occurs to us. How in the world do we accomplish what God wants us to do? What is it that God wants us to do? What if I mess up?

You can imagine this is what the disciples, must have thought when Jesus commissioned them - and then left. Jesus was with them every day to lead them, guide them, correct them and teach them - He was even with them for 50 days after His resurrection. Now what?

The book of Acts tells us what we do next. The book of Acts is not only a history of the early church, it also shows us how to live our lives as Christians. In essence it answers the question - How do we now live as believers?

How do we now live, since we are believers in Jesus Christ?

Today we saw that when God has us wait, the waiting is more about Jesus Christ than it is about us. In fact, when I give my life over to Jesus Christ, my life is no longer about me, it is now about Jesus Christ - every single aspect. These events these things that happen in my life, are they about me, or are they really about the one who I have promised my life to, Jesus Christ. Let us set aside the myth that those who give their life fully to Jesus are only missionaries. Let us embrace the reality that we all have lives that are to have every aspect committed to Jesus Christ.

You know that crazy egg delivery job that I had, it turns out that the job didn't have much to do about eggs. I had so many opportunities that summer to pray with people, tell

Are We There Yet?

Acts 1 :1-11

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people about Jesus, and I had plenty of opportunities to swallow my pride and act like a Christian - I grew plenty during that summer.

My prayer for you is that you respond to Jesus right where He has placed you and that you take some time to consider your waiting - it is not about you, your waiting is about Jesus.