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Ascension Sunday  
Acts 1.1-11, Luke 24.44-53

9 May 2021  
Salem, Bridgeport

“Why Wait?”

*Jesus said, “...I am sending upon you what my Father promised....<sup>1</sup>  
...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth....<sup>2</sup>  
so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”<sup>3</sup>  
Then ... they ... returned to Jerusalem with great joy;  
and ... were continually [together] ... blessing God.<sup>4</sup>*

The good news was that the disciples were going to receive an amazing gift.

And because they had witnessed for themselves the power of the living God  
who had raised their crucified leader and friend from the dead,  
they had faith and were beside themselves with joy – at least initially.

The bad news, however, was that they were going to have to wait for the promised gift  
and I wonder how long it was before the doubts set in!

Did they really have to wait in Jerusalem?

That was the most dangerous place for them to wait.

Well, that’s what Jesus had said so they guessed they’d have to wait there.

But how long would they have to wait? Hours? Days? Weeks? Months?

They had no clue.

All they knew was that they had to wait.

And we, too, are in that same situation.

As a congregation we had been expecting to sell our property by September 1,  
but now that deal seems dead, so now what?

We wait as we try to figure out what God is doing in all of this and where God is calling us.  
I would imagine most of us in our personal lives are waiting for something,  
if only for the pandemic to be over and life to return to normal!

Or maybe we’re waiting to recover after surgery, or waiting for the results of a medical test,  
or waiting to go on vacation, or waiting to hug loved ones we haven’t hugged in over a year.

In my cover article in this month’s newsletter

I talked about *what* we are to do *while* we wait,  
but have you ever wondered *why* we have to wait?

Well, today I’d like to reflect on some of the reasons God may have  
for making us wait for the things we long for,  
for the things for which we’ve prayed,  
for the things God has promised us.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24.49a

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1.8

<sup>3</sup> Luke 24.49b

<sup>4</sup> Luke 24.50-53

**One reason that God sometimes has us wait  
is because sometimes we're asking for the wrong things.**

Sometimes we're on the wrong path.

Sometimes we've confused what we want with what God wants.

Sometimes our heads have gotten too big

and our egos have gotten too invested in our own idols.

Think about Saul of Tarsus, for example.

He wanted to win God's favor, and so he studied with the best teacher,

and became the most zealous of the Pharisees,

spending 13 years persecuting the followers of Jesus,

and yet he still felt driven to prove himself to God,

and his desire for divine acceptance remained an unanswered prayer.

He didn't realize it at the time, but the way he was headed

was the exact opposite way he needed to go to please God.

It took him 27 years of being on the wrong road

and finally a dramatic encounter with the risen Christ

in which he was struck with temporary blindness

for God to put him on the road that would lead to his answered prayer

to know God's love and acceptance.

Sometimes God has us wait because we're hell-bent on following our own path

and by making us wait, God has a chance to point out our errors,

to destroy our idols,

to take our egos down a peg,

and to put us back on the path God has laid for us.

**A second reason that God sometimes has us wait**

**is because sometimes we're simply not ready for what God wants to give us.**

Sometimes we need more education.

Sometimes we need more experience.

Sometimes we need to have our character reshaped or our heart transformed.

Think about Moses, for example..

He was so arrogant and impetuous and hot-headed that he murdered a man,

and he was such a coward that instead of owning up to it, he ran for his life.

It took 40 years of shepherding flicks in the desert

before he was ready to shepherd God's people through the wilderness.

Sometimes we're simply not ready for the relationship or the job or the situation that we desire.

If we got them now, we'd be so unprepared that we would fail miserably at them.

Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time

to change us into the person we need to be

in order for us to be successful in that relationship or job or situation

that we so desperately want.

**So sometimes God has us wait because we're asking for the wrong things.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change us.**

**And a third reason that God sometimes has us wait**

**is because sometimes God needs time to change other people or situations.**

Sometimes we may be ready for that relationship we seek, but the other person is not ready.

Sometimes we may be ready for that new job,

but the person currently in it isn't yet ready to move on to their next position.

Sometimes we may be ready to move into that new house,

but the people living in it are not yet ready to move on to their next home.

David might have been ready to be king right away,

but maybe the people weren't ready for David.

Maybe they had to experience more of Saul's decline

and see more evidence of David's steadfast leadership

before they would be able to appreciate and respond most fully

to David's rule over them.

We only see our small myopic piece of the puzzle,

and yet there are so many other puzzle pieces both near to us and far from us

that have some bearing on us,

so maybe the reason we have to wait is because God is arranging other parts of the puzzle,

So like the waiter asking you to wait while the dirty table is cleaned and prepared just for you

sometimes God has us wait while the necessary preparations are being made.

**So sometimes God has us wait because we're asking for the wrong things.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change us.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change others.**

**And a fourth reason God sometimes has us wait**

**is because the longer we wait for something, the more we will appreciate it.**

Think how boring life would be if we got everything we wanted immediately!

What would Christmas or a birthday mean to a child

if they got tons of presents every day?

Think about women in the Bible.

Most of them had children, but some of the ones we remember most vividly

are the ones who waited for a long time for God to grant their prayer for a child –

Hannah, Rachel, Ruth, and Elizabeth, to name just a few.

While having one's prayer for a child granted is always wonderful,

it's the women who had to wait year after year, sometimes decade after decade,

who felt especially blessed.

Part of joy comes in the anticipation, in the waiting.

When my husband is making something special for dinner,

I try not to eat much for breakfast or lunch

because I know that the hungrier I am, the more delicious that meal is going to taste.

And then instead of shoveling it into my mouth as fast as possible,

I'm going to savor each bite,

to draw out the experience and derive as much pleasure as I can from it.

Sometimes God has us wait in order to increase our joy.

**So sometimes God has us wait because we're asking for the wrong things.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change us.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change others.**

**Sometimes God has us wait to increase our joy.**

**And a fifth reason God sometimes has us wait is because the longer we wait,  
the more apt we are to experience God's amazing power and love!**

If every prayer were answered right away, we might chalk it up to coincidence  
or worse, to our own efforts.

Sometimes we have to try everything we can think of,  
be forced to admit we can't do it by ourselves, and finally turn to God for help.  
before we will understand how powerful and how loving God really is.

Think about Mary and Martha sending word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill.

If Jesus had gone right away, it would have been a healing,  
but a healing like so many others.

But by waiting until Lazarus was dead,

Lazarus and Mary and Martha and all the disciples got to see Jesus raise him from death.

And even Jesus got to participate in that resurrection

which I'm sure made it easier for him to trust God to eventually raise him from the dead!

Think back over the times that God has been most evident in your life,

and most probably it will have been after some long and difficult period of waiting,

Sometimes God has us wait in order to increase our gratitude and love, our faith and hope.

**So sometimes God has us wait because we're asking for the wrong things.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change us.**

**Sometimes God has us wait because God needs time to change others.**

**Sometimes God has us wait to increase our joy.**

**And sometimes God has us wait to increase our faith.**

God does not make us wait just to annoy us; God always has a reason.

God's timing is always impeccable.

Our job is to hold onto the vision to which God has called us –

both as individuals and as a congregation – and to wait with both humility and hope.

**We wait in humility**, repenting of our wrongs,

letting go of our dreams & desires, our idols & egos, our need for certainty & control,  
and submitting to whatever it is that God wants.

**We wait in humility**, understanding that the more we let God reshape & reform & transform us,  
the sooner we'll be ready for whatever God has in mind.

**We wait in humility and hope**, realizing that it's not all about us,

that as God is working on us, God is working on everyone else in our lives,  
shaping every puzzle piece to eventually fit together perfectly.

**We wait in hope**, because whatever it is that God is planning to give us,

it will be more than worth the wait.

**And we wait in hope**, knowing that the greater the battle, the sweeter the victory,  
the farther the journey, the more enjoyable the destination,  
the longer the wait, the more abundant the blessings!

Whatever it is that you are waiting for, wait in humility and hope,

with faith and hope in the God who is just waiting to surprise you with joy!

Wait in faith and hope for Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!