

The Songs of life

WORTH THE WAIT

Today's theme from the Psalms is entitled worth the wait, I wonder how comfortable we all felt as I paused before I started, I wonder what flashed through your minds,

“Come on when is he going to start? I have other things to do”

“Has he forgotten what he is going to say”

“Or did you sit and pray”

“Or did you just think of nothing in particular and just enjoyed the peace?”

If you take anything from this sermon, I believe God would want us to slow down and enjoy the waiting times of life and enjoy the simple things that life has to offer us such as time.

I read a quote by John Ortberg the other day that said, “I tend to divide my minutes into two categories living (doing the day to day things) and waiting to live”

We can spend time waiting for a birthday, for Christmas, that ideal promotion at work that never comes, that boy friend or girl friend you have always wanted to meet or what ever we hope for. We can spend much of our time living and waiting to live, in our second choice worlds, in the hope that there is something better is round the corner.

We all killing time rushing through life at a hectic pace in the hope that one day life will become perfect.

So this week when you are tempted to rush things in life, slow down and ask God to speak to you, spend that extra 5 minutes with a friend or your children or what ever you are enjoying, the wait will be worth it.

The question then is how good are you at waiting?

Is waiting for something to happen part of the whole experience?

Does having to wait for something make it all the more special when we get it?

I wonder if we are missing out on the important things in life in our unwillingness to slow down. I think we are in danger of missing out on Gods wonders, as they just pass us by because we are all in such a hurry and we may not enjoying the blessings of each new day.

So is anything ever worth the wait in life?

Well I would suggest yes when we become Christians our whole life becomes a waiting game until we reach heaven our final destination.

As Christians we need to wait with hope and expectancy, in life's good times and difficult times, we need to wait in faith that God will come through for us.

When we get to heaven it really will be worth the wait.

This is where we find David as he writes this Psalm 40 in one of life's waiting periods, he knows one day he will be king but he is having to wait for that day and in fact this Psalm is written at a time when Saul is trying to kill David and his men.

So Psalm 40.

I think this Psalm is a great roller coaster of emotions, he starts with being saved from the slimy pit, to having his feet set on rock, to having a new song, to not being able to count the blessings and the wonders God has done, to troubles without number, to sins that have over taken him so that his heart fails within him, to rejoicing and being glad in Gods love and salvation, to asking the Lord again not to delay in saving him.

However bleak the situation looked for David one thing that runs through this Psalm I believe is David's trust and patient hope in God that he will deliver him in these difficult times.

And have you every wondered where David wrote this Psalm was it in a nice warm place or was it in the hustle and bustle of his military camp as they moved from place to place avoiding capture. Or do you think he found a quiet place to slip away and be by himself, to be close to God as Jesus often did to listen and share his heart with his loving God.

I wonder as Christians have we lost the art and practice of solitude waiting to here what God has to say to us slowing down enough to listen to God?

I am lead to believe that our young people spent time at Soul Survivor just waiting to see what God would do, and we need to cultivate this practice not in their lives but also in ours as well.

Some might say that's hard to just wait it's boring they may say, I will loose focus and not be able to concentrate. There is too much to do, but God reminds us to be still and know that he is God.

In terms of boredom Walker Percy describes boredom as “the self stuffed with self”

And this could be a description of our hurried lives; in being so preoccupied with self we miss what God wants us to receive.

So how do we know if we are living hurried lives?

Here are some signs:

Being haunted by the fear that there is not enough time in the day to do things, so we speed up we eat faster, talk faster, try and move into the lane of traffic that appears to be moving faster. Or we try and find the shortest supermarket queue and see if you can beat the person next to you out of the shop.

Or perhaps we multi-task, when we try and eat dinner, read, watch the television and have a conversation simultaneously.

When we buy time saving gadgets and you don't have time to read the instructions, or we have piles of books and magazines around that you don't have time to read.

We communicate superficiality by not listening properly.

Or we have an inability to love, love and hurry are said to be incompatible.

Finally sunset fatigue

“When we come home at the end of the day’s work, those who need our love the most, those to whom we are most committed, end up getting the leftovers.

But Jesus said come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest, and cast all your anxious thoughts on to me. May be for some here today you need to rest and wait for God to act in a situation, rather in our strength.

We need to be mindful that in being so busy doing things for God, we leave enough time for God to act in our lives.

I worry what values the western world has exported around the world when Elvira shares she has 6 jobs to do I would suggest this is not an African way of life but a western way.

David does not appear to have a problem with slowing down for God David’s primary focus is on the Lord in the hard times and the good times, which is may be why God described him as a man after his own heart. But I guess having your life on the line can focus the mind!

So the next time you are waiting for something rather than getting frustrated ask God to reveal something new in the situation as v 3 says “ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God, many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord”.

May be as we wait for things in life we need to ask God to put a new song in our mouths to give us a new perspective on things and a new hope.

Ian Philips often quotes the M Scott Peck’s “life is difficult” and may be it is, but there is also a new song of hope and a joy in the waiting times.

I believe Terry Waite who spent 4 years in solitary confinement wrote “ I am truly happy to have discovered that suffering need not destroy, it can be creative”

If as Christians we cannot be joyful knowing we have a place and a home in heaven then who in the world will be?

And on the subject of Joy David goes on in verse

v 16 “but may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you”

In John 15 v 11 it says “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete”, not any old Joy but a joy that characterises God.

John Ortberg writes on joy:

The bible puts joy in the non-optional category. Joy is a command. Joylessness is a serious sin, one that religious people are particularly prone to indulge in, it may be the sin most readily tolerated by the church. It is rarely the object of church discipline. Tel-evangelists don't get cancelled for displaying too much of it. But how much damage have joyless Christians done to the cause of Christ? P68

In Hebrews we read Christ endured the cross because of the joy set before him, we are his joy.

I could go on but I am beginning to be challenged that one of the things that should mark us out as Christians as we wait for heaven or wait for Jesus to return is our joy.

Lewis Smedes puts it this way “To miss out on joy is to miss out on the reason for your existence”

I think sometimes as Christian we get caught up on the wrong side of the cross we focus on our problems and difficulties and rather than the joy life could bring us, God says be joyful in our hope.

And it might be God wants to release a spirit of Joy among us today?

I wonder if we invited new people to come to church how would they react when they see us all with smiling faces overflowing with joy.

How would work change if we were known around the office or to our neighbours as people of joy and laughter?

If we are to be joyful people we need to turn back to God, and allow God to shape our lives so we can be more like Jesus.

V6 say my ears you have pierced which can be read in two ways in the Old Testament slaves ears where pierced to show they belonged and where obedient to their master.

But it can also mean that our ears need to be unblocked so that we can hear God afresh in our lives. And figuratively maybe we need our ears pierced today in joy and obedience to God or slowing down enough to hear him speak to us.

And in slowing down God may reveal new wonders in our lives day by day.

As verse 5 says

And just as an aside

While I was preparing I wondered how we could experience God in a new ways we could be radical and experience God in a Psalm out doors.

As Psalm 23, go and lie down in green pastures or by still water and wait to see what God has to say to us.

Or when we have the Church BBQ have an open-air service then we would not have to rush around so much between services.

So if we do slow down, appreciate all of Gods wonders, if we are **filled with joy, and have a new song a new perspective in life, what are the consequences?**

I would suggest the proclamation of Gods salvation out of the overflowing joy of all that God has done in our lives.

V8 – 10 says ...

David could not keep quiet so neither should we.

Yes troubles will come and life can be difficult but don't get stuck in the difficulties remember verse 16

So in summary is life worth the wait yes! As part of the songs of life let us slow down, allow God into our lives in the good and the difficult times. Look out for Gods wonders everyday in the wait. Look out for the extraordinary in the ordinary, be expectant that God will act in our lives.

Wait with hope and joy that one day we will be in heaven rejoicing with the Angels because of Jesus salvation.

*Sermon preached by Ian Larkham at Crawley Baptist Church
Sunday 18th October 2009*