Waiting Time is Trusting Time

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[0:00] Well, let's pray together, will we, as we come to God's holy word this morning. Lord God, we would thank you so much for the time that we've spent together already this morning.

And we thank you for the enormous privilege that we have now to hear and to study and to apply your life-giving word to our lives. So, dear Father, we ask that you would come and be with us this morning.
Would your spirit be our teacher and our guide? Father, would you cleanse us and would you change us from the inside out, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Great, are we well this morning? We're nice and warm in here. It has dropped, hasn't it, this week? It's cold, I think we should all go into hibernation. Get away from the cold. Good, well, if you've got a Bible, then please turn to Luke chapter 18.
It's where we're going to be this morning. And to warm us up, I want to begin by asking you a question, getting you thinking. Here's the question. Are you good at waiting?
[1:04] Are you good at waiting? My confession this morning is that I am turning not very good at waiting. And I want to blame wholeheartedly this morning. This offer that I was made a few months ago to join, it was a free offer, to join Amazon Prime.

So, A, I joined it because, A, I love Amazon, and B, I'm Scottish and I love free stuff. So, Amazon offered me this three-month free trial and I'm there.
But it's turned me into this really impatient person. So, I'll give you an example. I ordered a book a few Sunday nights ago and it didn't come first thing on Monday morning.
And they made me a promise that I got free next day delivery. So, I'm there and I'm going to my emails and just double-checking the confirmation. I'm going to my emails and I'm looking up the Amazon website, looking for the customer service number.
And I'm out there looking at the letterbox every ten minutes to see if it came. Because Amazon made me this promise. And it did come on Monday. And the irony is I opened the box with joy, looked at it and thought, yeah, I'll read that later.
[2:09] There it goes on the bookshelf. It's turned me into this really bad person at waiting. Now, I'm not very good at waiting. And so, here is why I found what Jesus said to us last week and looked difficult.

Because he told his disciples that they were going to have to get good at waiting. Last week, Luke 17, Jesus told his disciples that there was imminently coming a day when he was no longer going to be present physically with them.
His journey, he was telling them, was going to go via the cross. Now, we know how the story ended. We know that Jesus would die. He would later rise. He would later ascend. And he would go to be with his Father in heaven.
But, this is what Jesus was telling his disciples last week, that they can base their lives, the whole of their lives on the truth. That one day, on a day that they don't know, but a day that they won't miss, he's going to return.
So, they will find themselves waiting in this in-between time. The time between Jesus ascending, going to be with his Father in heaven, and Jesus returning to be the victorious and the triumphant King.
[3:26] And I guess that is where we need to click. That that's where we are living this morning. We, too, find ourselves, don't we, in this in-between time between Jesus ascending, going to be with the Father and his return.

We, too, are in this thing that we call the great weight. And here's the big question I want us to think about this morning, as we think about waiting. Is, what does it look like to wait well?

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And the answer that Jesus is going to give, and what Luke's going to tell us this morning, by way of two parables, is going to show us that to be a disciple that waits well means that you should be marked by an all-out trust in God.
Because waiting time is trusting time. Now, as we go through this together, we're going to try and put some flesh in the bones of that idea this morning. But the big challenge that I want us to feel is not the alarm.
The big challenge, we're going to try and help us feel this challenge that Jesus presents to his disciples this morning. We're trying to ask us two questions. Here's the first one. You ready for the first one? Who are you trusting? Who are you trusting?
[4:31] So the first parable that Jesus tells, in verses 1 to 8, features a persevering woman. Now, let's read this together, picking it up at verse 1. Chapter 18.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.
And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, Grant me justice against my adversary. For some time he refused, but finally he said to himself, Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually come and attack me.
And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night?
Will they keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?
[5:51] There's a few things that we need to see before we meet this widow. Who is Jesus speaking to? Well, verse 22 of chapter 17 gives us that.

Do you see? He's speaking to his disciples. And the question is, Why is he speaking to his disciples here at 18.1? Well, do you notice how, as we read it through, Luke doesn't want us to be in any doubt as to why Jesus is addressing his disciples here.
Luke wants to rule out any speculation that we might have as to why Jesus is speaking like this. He tells us at verse 1. Short answer, because Jesus knows his disciples.
And he knows that he's just dropped a bombshell on them. And he knows that in their hearts they're probably confused and they're probably scared. And so he tells them this parable so that they'll keep praying and so that they won't give up.
If you've got an ESV there, so that they won't lose heart. Now here is the heart of Jesus, the great pastor. Here are the words of Jesus, the great shepherd of souls.
[7:07] Do you see how much Jesus loves his disciples in these verses? Do you see the love coming through? He wants his disciples not to despair, but rather to keep trusting and keep praying.

And maybe that's where you are in your Christian life this morning. Maybe you're ready just to throw in the towel. Well, it's been my prayer this week that as we hear the words of Jesus in Luke chapter 18, that by God's Spirit, that they would come as a balm to many a weary soul this morning.
Jesus is speaking to his disciples, telling them this so that they will keep praying and not lose heart. So let's meet this widow, shall we?
The action takes place, you see, in the parable in a city. And Jesus tells us about two people who live in the city. First of all, there's a widow. And immediately we see that she's not had it easy in life. She clearly lost her husband. And from the text, she's clearly got a problem. Do you see it, verse 3? She's got an adversary. So she's got somebody who's clearly wronged her.
[8:22] You read the commentators, they'll tell you it's most likely that it was financially she was wronged. And she's desperate and she's needy and she's trying to live her life in a big, bad world.

And so you can picture, remember the disciples are hearing this. And they're thinking about their lives. So you're thinking how it is tough to follow Jesus. How it is costly to carry the cross.
Especially in a world that stands against everything that Jesus stands for and teaches. And you begin to understand how as they hear Jesus talk about this widow.
That they begin to click with this widow. Actually, she represents Jesus' followers who are feeling the tough nature of life trying to follow him in this world.
And Jesus tells us about this widow. He also tells us about this judge that's in the city. Do you notice he tells us two things about this judge? One, he doesn't care for people. Two, he doesn't

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care for God.
[9:25] And he hears this widow's case. And time after time, what does he do? The text tells us he throws out her case. But time after time, she gets on his case.

Do you see it? Verse 3, she kept on coming to him. Now I love this. Now I've got a bit of an imagination when I try and get into a text. I was trying to picture the judge this week in this story. Just imagine him, okay? He wakes up in the morning, big stretch, puts on the dressing gown. Down he goes. What does he do? Opens the curtains. There she is. Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. When am I getting justice?
So he pulls the curtains closed again. He runs back to his dressing room. He gets ready for work. He tries to sneak out the back door through the garden. There she is with a placard. At the gate. When am I getting justice? He gets to his office.
This is probably fast forwarding a little bit. But he checks his emails. There's an email from this widow. Header, justice, body of text. When am I getting it? Goes on Twitter.
[10:27] There she is. She's created a hashtag, justice for widow. Do you see what he's telling us? She's on his case all the time. All the time. Love how the judge describes her at verse 5.

She keeps bothering me. Do you hear the exasperation in his voice? I'll give her justice simply because, and simply with the aim that she will not beat me down.
Now I love, you'll maybe miss this in the English. The Greek word there is suggestive of giving somebody a black eye. How vexed is this judge by what this widow keeps on doing?
Now why is she doing it? Because he's the only one who can do something about her situation. And so she goes back time and time and time and time again.
Now what is Jesus' point here? Verse 7. If this judge, if this unbelieving and unsympathetic man, if he will do right by this woman, if this judge who has no relationship with this widow, who has no love for this widow, who has no concern for this widow, if he will give this widow justice, then how much more will God?
[11:48] That's the argument here. How much more will God? And who will he give justice to? His chosen ones.

If you've got an ESV there, his elect. I was trying to think on this this week. That word. Powerful. And one of my favorite places, some of you will know me long enough to know this, that I love to meet people, is Starbucks.
Suddenly occurred to me that I love Amazon, I love Starbucks. I've totally sold out to the man, haven't I? But I love to meet people in Starbucks. You get to the front, if you've been there, they ask you two questions.
The first question, well there's three questions really. First question, how was your day? Second question, what is your drink? Third question, what's your name? And what do they do? Scribble it down on the side of the cup, don't they?
Scribble it down on the side of the cup. Scribble it down on the side of the cup. Scribble it down on the side of the cup. This word is telling us that God hasn't just scribbled our names down on the side of a cup. Actually, God has graven our names, the names of his people, on the palm of his hands.
[12:53] This word is speaking of this intimate relationship that God has with his people. They are his chosen ones. They are his called out ones.

They are people on whom he has placed his hand and who he has lifted out of the pit. He's called out of the darkness and into his marvelous light. These are God's people. It was English Puritan John Owen who famously said that the greatest hindrance that we have in the Christian life is not our lack of effort.
It's the lack of acquaintedness that we have with our privileges. Now, what is he saying? Let me try and put that in modern English. What he's saying is that how often do we never stop to think about the gospel?
How often do we never stop like a good red to savor it and take it in and to allow the taste, every aroma to fill our lives, every truth quarry down to permeate our lives?
This is what he's saying. That every truth of the gospel should fill our lives. We are his people.
[14:04] Not by cheap grace, but by costly blood and sacrifices. We'll see in a minute. We are God's people. Now, do some of us need to reflect on that truth this morning? That we are not our old selves, but now we just do a few more realistic things.

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No, that's not what Jesus is saying. That actually we are people who God has called out of darkness, placed into light, and has completely transformed us. And what is our identity now? We are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.
We are the adopted children of the Lord. And what does Jesus say such children do? Cry out to him day and night, saying, do right by his God.
Dear God, we need you. Dear God, we are clinging to you. We are trusting you, and all of our hope is in every single truth of your words. And probably in the most immediate context.
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus. And as this father, as he hears the call of his children, whether it's in this life or in the next, will he not, in his own perfect way, according to his own perfect timing, will he not do right?
[15:14] Of course he'll do right. He sees. He knows. He cares. Our God is no casual sympathizer.

Our God is no distant empathizer. Our God is a loving father. What is it we sing? I have a maker. He formed my heart.
Before even time began, my life was in his hands. He knows my name. He knows my every thought. He sees each tear that falls, and he hears me when I call.
So do you see what Jesus is saying here to his disciples? Be like that widow. Be like that widow. Keep on calling out to God in prayer. What a privilege. What a privilege.
And what an invitation. And what a reason not to give up. And that little challenge there at the end of that first section, Jesus says, when I return, will I find faith, such faith, in my people?
[16:29] Will I find this heart in my people? Will I come and return? And will I find a people who are longing for me to return, who are like this widow, persistently calling out to God in prayer? You say, what are disciples that are waiting well marked by?

Well, here's the first thing to see. They're marked by an all-out persistence. Now, I've been a bit obsessed with my step count recently. I've got one of these phones that tells me how many steps I've done in a day.
I get a bit obsessed with it. What is it doctors tell us we're supposed to do? 10,000 steps in a day? Yeah, right. A bit obsessed with my step count in a minute. I was trying to imagine this week, if my phone, instead of recording how many steps I'd done in a day, see if my phone recorded how much I actually prayed in a day, what would it reveal about me?
Actually, it would probably reveal that my prayer life is a lot more sporadic than it is persistent. Let me ask you, some of us this morning, have we stopped calling? Have we stopped crying out to our loving Heavenly Father in prayer?
Here's my thought for us as we try and grip this with both hands this morning, as we've seen Jesus lay out both the invitation and the privilege that is before us. How are we going to do this?
[17:42] How are we going to go from a, out of obedience to the Lord, how are we going to move from being sporadic in prayer to being persistent in prayer? You know, one of the things I find so helpful, and again, I do this sporadically rather than persistently, prayer journaling.

I find this so helpful to write down my prayers, to write down my thoughts, particularly to write down my cries to God. And it is incredible to look back actually over the months, over the weeks, over the months, over the years, and see how God has answered.
And actually to see how, not only has he answered my prayers, but actually my heart has changed in this. Maybe some of us, we want to start writing down how we cry out to God. Again, you'll get it on Amazon, okay?
But here's another thing, a week and Wednesday, not just individually praying. How can we corporately be better at this? Next Wednesday evening, such a joy to meet together, together as God's people and pray.
Praying as a church, so important for what we do here. Next, it is a week and Wednesday, isn't it? It is a week and Wednesday. Come along, 745. It's just a wonderful time. I'm so encouraged every time that I leave, that we've met together as Brunsford Evangelical Church, to pray together.
[18:54] Get that in the diary. How can we move from being sporadic in our prayer lives, to being persistent? What are disciples that are waiting well marked by? Firstly, they'll be marked by an all-out persistence.

So as we leave this first section, let me ask you, who are you trusting? Who are you trusting? Here's the second question. What are you trusting?

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Second parable that Jesus tells, and let's get back into the text here, verses 9 to 14. We've moved from a persevering woman, and now we're considering a broken man. So let's pick it up again at verse 9.
Jesus, or Luke rather, goes on, to some who were confident of their own righteousness, and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.
Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.
[20:03] I fast twice a week, and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector, stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified, before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
Again, verse 9, look who Jesus is speaking to. I love how Luke tells us this. Jesus is speaking to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and who also treated others with contempt.
And you see how it's a parable about two men, and as we'll see, it's a parable about two men who've got very different chests. Okay? Stay with me. It makes sense.
Okay? And these two men, do you notice, are heading to one place. Where are they heading? Beginning of verse 10. They're heading to the temple. What are they doing at the temple? They're heading there to pray.
[21:16] Now, the first man is a Pharisee, and he's a man who puffs his chest. Look how Jesus describes what he does. He stands by himself, probably so others can see him, and so he can stay away from the riffraff, like this tax collector.

And he prays. Now, look at the words of this praying peacock. What does he pray? I thank you that I am not like other men. Now, what does he mean by that? Does he get different hair?
No. What does he do? He goes on. I am not like the men who, what, cheat. I'm not like the men who are unjust. I'm not like the men who are unfaithful. I am not even like this tax collector.
Now, you can be sure that he said that one really, really loud, so everybody could hear. And do you see how he doesn't just give thanks for what he doesn't do? Actually, he goes on to declare to God, as if somehow God needed reminded of what he does do.
He fasts twice a week. The Old Testament law required that you only fast once a year. So do you see how this Pharisee has gone well above and beyond? And he tithes, and gives away the legally required amount of stuff.
[22:25] Here is this Pharisee. As my grandpa used to say, if this man were chocolate, he would eat himself. But here's the second man.

Here's the tax collector. Where does he stand? Notice in the text, he stands far off. Now, remember where he is. He's in the temple. So he's in the temple, and remember what he's faced with.
The holiness of God. There it is for all to see, the holiness of God right in front of him. And in his shame, most likely for who he is, and most likely for what he's done, he cannot, do you see it in the text, he cannot even lift his eyes to heaven.
Instead, his face is to the floor, and he beats his chest. And his prayer, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.
Mercy is what he's throwing himself upon. Now, in the Greek there, the word mercy carries with it, it kind of means propitiate.
[23:34] He's praying, Lord, would you somehow make a way for your holy anger against my sin? Would you make a way for it to be turned away? Would you make a way for your holy, righteous anger against my sin to be satisfied?

And of course, he's looking at the temple as he's thinking about the temple sacrifices. He's thinking about the real blood of the real bulls and goats being really shed to cover his real sin.
And he throws himself upon the mercy of God. Pharisee puffs his chest, this tax collector beats his chest. Now, here's the thing.
If you ask these men at the time, what basis should they get to heaven? What card are you going to play to get into God's presence? Here's how they would have answered.

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The Pharisee is confidently playing the me card. My achievements, my life's efforts, my good works. He goes into his closet, or I like to call it his wardrobe of works, and he pulls out good deed after good deed after good deed.
[24:40] Kind of like a game of chop trumps, if you remember playing that? When you were young, maybe you used to play it with my brothers all the time. He plays his cards, tithing, nine. Fasting, nine. High score.

Whereas the tax collector, well, he opens the door of his closet and he knows that there is nothing in there but skeletons. He looks at his top trumps cards, works, one.
Honesty, minus 16. There's no question who should win here. But do you see how the Pharisee plays the me card? Do you see how the tax collector also plays the me card?
Except with tears in his eyes, he scribbles down three letters after the me. Not MBE, not VIP, not CEO.
He scribbles down R-C-Y. Does the tax collector play the me card? No. He plays the mercy card. What right do I have to stand before a holy God?
[25:45] What merit of mine do I bring to him? Why should he look favorably upon me? I throw myself wholly, completely, and fully on your mercy, God.

Now here's the question, who wins? Who wins? Now it's Christmas time, isn't it? Yes it is. Christmas time for me when I was young always reminded of pantomime season.
It's pantomime season, isn't it? Oh no it's not. I was waiting for it. One of you got it. Come on, we need to get back in the game here, okay? It's pantomime season.
So I was trying to imagine, again my imagination, trying to tell this story and the crowd responding in a pantomime fashion, okay? Try and get us to see what Jesus is going to hear.
Jesus speaks of the Pharisee every good work, way. He tithes, way. He fasts, way. The tax collector, even that name, boo.
[26:45] He stands far off, too right he did. He prayed, how dare he pray? Because there's no doubt who this audience, as they hear Jesus tell this parable, there is no doubt who they see as the villain.

Well, Jesus, feel the explosion of the bombshell that he drops at verse 14. Jesus says, it was this man, the tax collector, who went home justified, that means he went home declared right with God, not the Pharisee.
Now, I'm thinking, Jesus, show you're working. Show you're working. How have you got there? We've got the privilege of looking on this, standing where we do in God's grand story of redemption, because we can put a face to that mercy card, can't we?
How is God's wrath against our sins satisfied? How is our sin going to be dealt with? How is it that we, unrighteous, can be declared justified in God's sight?
Simply because of Jesus. simply because of Jesus. Remember, he's the one in the context of Luke we saw last week who is on his way to the cross to offer his life as a sacrifice, to offer his life as an atonement, to offer his life as a propitiation for our sins so that we can be made right with God.
[28:14] You see, the cry of the heart of the disciple is that I've got nothing else to plead before you, Lord, but mercy alone. And nothing else to plead before you, no one else to plead before you, but Christ alone.

Those words that Mr. Top Lady penned all those years ago, the great hymn, Rock of Ages. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling.
Naked come to thee for dress, helpless, look to thee for grace. Foul, aye, to the fountain fly, wash me, be Savior, or I die.
Friends, what are you trusting in? Are you trusting in me? Are you trusting in mercy? Have you experienced, have you come to the cross and experienced the mercy of God?
Because as we have, there's no way that we can remain the same. What is it that Paul says in Romans 12, if you want to look at it afterwards? Having unpacked all this wonderful theology about what God has done in the gospel, what does he write to this church?
[29:26] Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to do what? To offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

this is your true and proper worship. What are disciples that are waiting well marked by? Firstly, they're marked by an all-out persistence and secondly, they're marked by an all-out dependence.

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You know, just as we close, our little girl, Chloe, is so excited at the minute because every morning as she plays in the living room, she can see her her advent calendar.
There it is. It doesn't look like that, okay? It's a chocolate one, but this one's good. Advent calendar, the grandma center a few weeks ago. Everybody got their advent calendar ready?
Yeah? For next Friday? Do you know what advent means? Do you know what advent means? It means coming. Coming.
[30:31] This is what we're doing. Every time we're opening our advent calendar, preparing our hearts, remembering the birth of Jesus, remembering his first coming. I was challenged this week in light of these verses.

See, each time as a family, well, she'll get the chocolate, but each time we do this as a family, we open those doors as we remember his first coming and celebrate it.
Let's anticipate his second coming. Let's anticipate his return. What we do, where we stand in God's grand story of redemption, you know, one of my favorite Christmas hymns is, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, the song that's meant to capture the prayers of so many faithful Israelites at the time who were awaiting the first coming of the Messiah.
O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel.
And when we sing it, we're not simply just reenacting the hearts of those first Israelites. Actually, when we sing it, we're standing where we do. There's something in our hearts as well that should be praying, Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus, would you return?
[31:47] And would you make right all that is wrong with the world? Because waiting time is trusting time. And what are disciples that are waiting well?

What are they marked by? Firstly, they're marked by an all-out persistence in prayer. And secondly, they're marked by an all-out dependence on Christ. Let's pray together, shall we, as we close.
So, dear Father, we thank you for our time together this morning. Father, we're so aware of our weakness. And so, Lord, would you, the all-gracious and all-merciful God, would you help us as your people to walk this week by faith and not by sight?
Would you help us to be those who are persistent in calling out to you in prayer? And would you help us to be those who are dependent on no one else but Christ alone?
So, gracious Father, we ask in Jesus' precious and worthy name. Amen.

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