

## Waiting on God [Luke 1:5-17]

Geldart, Dec 2, 2018

1. Mingle question recap
  - a. Have you ever waited a long time for something you really wanted?
    - i. Maybe a gift
    - ii. Maybe a special event
    - iii. Maybe a letter or word from a loved one
2. Most of us have grown so used to instant communication that even a few minutes or hours without word can send us into a panic.
3. Jenn and I share same iPhone/apple account, so we can use the “find my iphone” app to see real-time where each other are (assuming we’re by our cell phones... which of course we ALWAYS are!)
  - a. This can come in handy if we’re trying to meet up somewhere. Rather than continue to bug Jenn with calls or texts, I can simply see where she’s at myself. OH shes just left home, I’ve got a little time.
4. But once in a while, Jenn’s phone dies when she’s out. So I can’t see where she is! Can’t call or text her to find out.
  - a. We’re cut off.
  - b. Worst case scenarios flood my mind.
  - c. I feel so helpless. So anxious.
  - d. All I want is to see her drive in the driveway. (OR plug her phone in the car charger!)
5. It’s hard to wait.
6. Or when my boys know Baba and Gramma are coming to visit (my parents), they beg to stand near the end of our driveway, eagerly looking down the street for their car.... EVEN THOUGH we know they just left KC.
7. It’s hard to wait.
  - a. For word
  - b. For arrivals.
8. It’s hard.
9. The Gospel of Luke opens into just this kind of scene! – We just started our study last week!
10. More than 400 years before, Luke’s Gospel opens, God had spoken to his people through the prophet Malachi
  - a. The final book of what we call the Old Testament.
    - i. around 430BC
  - b. Here’s what he said:
  - c. 3:1 “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts
  - d. 4:2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.
  - e. 4:5-6a <sup>5</sup>“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers...
11. Around 400 BC, God told his people, “I’m coming! The SUN of righteousness shall rise on you. I’ll send ahead another prophet like Elijah to prepare the way. Then The dawn will break, and I myself will come to you.”

- a. OH they were getting excited.
12. Then God went silent. Not a peep had been heard from him since those words.
- a. And as Luke opens, God has been silent for 400 years.
  - b. 400 YEARS -- we can barely fathom that time. In our fast paced world. Our short attention spans.
  - c. Our country has only been around less than 250 yrs.
    - i. 400 yrs ago the Pilgrims still 2 year away from sailing to America.
  - d. 400 years is a LONG TIME.
    - i. A VERY long time to wait.
13. Waiting is hard.
14. How do you do with waiting?
15. This book (Bible) is filled with people who had to wait on God
- a. Adam and Eve were promised that even though they'd poisoned themselves and the Earth with sin and death, God would rescue them.
    - i. one of Eve's descendants – a human would triumph over Satan and reverse the curse!
  - b. They waited year after year. Would it be their firstborn Cain? Their second born Able?
    - i. Nope. Cain murders Able. God banishes him.
    - ii. They kept waiting
  - c. Noah waited in faith for the flood to come, for the flood to stop, for the waters to recede.
  - d. Abraham was promised a son in his old age from whom would come the Rescuer
    - i. Though he as already 70, he waited another 30 years before Isaac was born
      - 1. And made some pretty poor choices in the meantime
  - e. Isaac and Jacob both waited for the Rescuer who would come from their line
    - i. Waiting Quite imperfectly
  - f. Joseph waited on God for years as a slave in Potiphar's house, and then in the dungeons of Egypt where he'd been wrongfully incarcerated.
  - g. The Israelites waited for 400 years to be rescued from slavery in Egypt
  - h. Moses waited for God to deliver his people time and time again, having no power in himself to do that which God had promised
    - i. In faith, he waited for God to make a way where there was no way, as he and the Israelites, were trapped between the cliffs, and between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's approaching army.
  - i. Rahab waited in faith for the rescue she brokered
  - j. King David waited on God for years as he was pursued by murderous king Saul
  - k. Daniel waited all his life for God to restore his people to the land they'd been exiled from
    - i. For God to rescue him from the mouths of the lions
    - ii. For the glorious Son of Man he saw in visions to come and put an end to the evil world empires
  - l. And all Israel were waiting for God to rescue them.
    - i. They'd been in captivity in Babylon,
    - ii. They'd watched as world empires rose and fell.
    - iii. The Babylonians were conquered by the Persians.
      - 1. Who were then conquered by Alexander the Great and the Greeks.
      - 2. Who were then conquered by the Romans.
    - iv. All of whom oppressed the Jews.
    - v. But the Jews knew the prophecies.
    - vi. They knew God had promised to come to them. To rescue Them. To make everything sad come untrue
  - m. All of God's people, throughout history have waited on God

- i. *Some waited well. Some waited poorly.*
- 16. If you're in to God, you're in to waiting.
- 17. How do we do with waiting?
  - a. Waiting can build anticipation. Excitement. Hope!
    - i. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
  - b. But waiting can also kill hope.
    - i. And breed hopelessness
    - ii. Forgetfulness
    - iii. Resignation.
- 18. Waiting is hard.
  - a. And the longer the wait, the easier it is to lose hope.
  - b. Yes you may still go through the motions, but your heart is cold. The fire has died.
  - c. IF there be any warm embers left, they're buried deep. Forgotten.
- 19. Waiting either refines our hope into steadfastness and faith
- 20. Or in despair, makes us turn quickly to substitutes
- 21. It's no accident that God consistently uses the imagery of a marriage to describe his relationship to his people
  - a. And when they get tired of waiting, they turn to other lovers.
  - b. In the analogy, this unfaithfulness is spiritual. Looking to other idols for hope, security, pleasure.
- 22. And Israel did this over and over and over again throughout its history.
  - a. Their history is a repeating cycle of idolatry, God's punishment, God's rescue, and then Israel's quick impatience...leading back into idolatry.
- 23. Israel did NOT wait well.
  - a. The hearts of most grew cold. Protective.
  - b. It had been 400 years. Surely God's forgotten about us.
  - c. But some still held out hope.
  - d. They remember the Words God had spoken through the centuries
  - e. Believing he would remember them. Remember his promise. Hanging on his last words:
  - f. I'm coming. The sun will rise. I'll send a messenger to make way for he who will rescue!
  - g. Ever since God delivered the Jews from Egypt, they celebrated with the Passover Seder.
    - i. During this, each year, at one point, the youngest child in the family would go open the door and look out --- everyone would say "Is Elijah here yet?"
    - ii. Not yet, the child would say.
    - iii. They knew what God had said.
    - iv. They still held out hope.
    - v. But it had been a long. Very long time.
- 24. It's into THIS, this long, protracted waiting. This spiritual climate that Luke begins.
  - a. Read 1:5-6
    - i. Doesn't read like other myths.
    - ii. People, Places. Verifiable!
    - iii. Judea
    - iv. Herod the Great
      - 1. Mentioned extensively in the writings of Josephus[118] and others. Among his numerous building projects was the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and his name is found on contemporary Jewish coins.[119]
    - v. Right before the turn of the millennium
      - 1. Herod died 4BC. Likely starts in setting of 5 or 6BC.
  - b. But these are just place markers.

- c. First 2 characters: Zach and Elizabeth
    - i. BOTH righteous before God...walking blamelessly
    - ii. He was a good priest, she a daughter of priests
    - iii. The poster couple for good religious home
  - d. Read v7
    - i. But theres a problem! They have never been able to have children.... And now they're old!
    - ii. This couple has been waiting too --- for a child --- for a long time.
    - iii. So long that they'd practically lost hope.
    - iv. They were now too old.
  - e. In many ways, this couple is like the nation of Israel
    - i. Trying to follow God.
    - ii. Waiting desperately for a child! – for one to be born
    - iii. Feeling the weight of the passage of time.
      - 1. Perhaps Losing hope.
  - f. They were without child. And advanced in years.
25. Read v8-9
- a. This backdrop for Zech and the nation of Israel is enriched when we discover that there had gotten to be lots and lots of priests in those days. More than 18,000!
  - b. So many that they were divided into 24 divisions, meaning each division only would serve in the temple TWO WEEKS A YEAR!
    - i. And even then, individuals weren't guaranteed to actually get to go into the temple and do their thing. These would be decided within each division by lot.
      - 1. And each priest could only serve in the most hold of tasks – burning incense – once in his life.
    - ii. Can you imagine what that would do to the mindset of these priests? Even godly righteous priests like Zechariah?
      - 1. Prehaps spending most of your time kicking your heals. Sitting on the porch. Doing nothing.
    - iii. So many priests, so little to do most days.
    - iv. And God's not talking.
    - v. Hasn't in many lifetimes.
    - vi. But they keep puttering on. Keeping up the rituals. The religious duties.
    - vii. But inside, it's fiendishly easy to lose hope. Let cynicism subtly creep in. And go through the motions.
  - c. Well, Zech's devision was up. And what's more, Zech got chosen to go into the temple!
    - i. Once in a lifetime.
    - ii. This was a special time.
    - iii. Zech and Elizabeth both would have been excited. A rare honor, to actually get to go in, and do what he'd trained to do all his life.
    - iv. In this ceremony, to burn incense.
26. What's more, everyone was outside, praying. This was a big moment.
- a. Set against a background of 400 years of silence.
  - b. This old, childless, god-fearing Jew walks into the temple.
27. And nothing could have prepared him for what happened next.
28. Read v11
29. Stop.
- a. Sit in this moment. In this time.
  - b. Nothing like this has happened anywhere in Israel – for 400 years

- i. 400 years!
  - c. God's been silent. For 400 years. Not a peep.
- 30. And then... in an instant.
  - a. Everything changes.
- 31. The old barren priest, who's name means God Remembers...
  - a. He gets the first words from God since he promised to remember!
  - b. He who had thought himself forgotten by God. In his childless years
  - c. In his national identity.
  - d. To him, God speaks – Of COURSE I remember
- 32. When have you been so desperate to hear from God?
  - a. To hear a word.
  - b. When have you been angry, cynical... practically hopeless of hearing God's voice?
- 33. Lean in, my brother. Lean in my sister
  - a. God Remembers
- 34. And it gets better!
  - a. Read v12-17
  - b. God remembers Zech – He'll have a child – a son. Even in his old age!
  - c. God remembers Israel, his promise to come! His promise to send one like Elijah to prepare his way.
  - d. God's sending ELIJAH!
  - e. And in case you've forgotten, God hasn't. He'll turn the hearts of fathers to children. And prepare the way for the Lord!
- 35. God remembers.
- 36. Even in the waiting.
- 37. The scriptures teach us about two ways to think about time. Chronos and Kairos.
  - a. Chronos is clock time. Days. Hours. Minutes.
  - b. Kairos is about the RIGHT time. The time when everything lines up, everything works toward a special moment. You can seize it, or miss it.
    - i. Chronos and Kairos.
- 38. God is the God of both.
  - a. And he brings BOTH together in unfathomably intricate and beautiful precision.
- 39. We need to know about Chronos AND Kairos time as we wait.
  - a. Because we Get Chronos.
  - b. We can measure it. We can see the stopwatch ticking down.
    - i. The pie has 30 minutes left.
    - ii. Jenn will be home in 15 minutes.
  - c. We struggle GREATLY waiting for Kairos
    - i. For the RIGHT time.
    - ii. We don't know when it will be!
    - iii. How many more minutes?
    - iv. Husbands and wives
      - 1. Husbands know chronos time says WE NEED TO LEAVE in 1 minute
      - 2. Wives know what matters is WHEN I'M READY!
        - a. How much longer until you're ready?
        - b. Your wife will not answer with chronos.
        - c. She'll answer with Kairos
      - 3. Soon, honey. I'm almost ready.
    - v. People are like that with God.
      - 1. How much longer, God? Are you still coming?

2. It's been 400 years. Have you forgotten?
40. God remembers. Kairos and Chronos working together in a prophetic dance
- a. God Remembers.
    - i. Hes been working everything behind the scenes so both Chronos AND KAIROS work everything together for good.
    - ii. We can see now that during these 400 yrs God was silent, but he was not inactive.
      1. He was working behind the scenes waiting and working EVERYTHING so that he could step into our world at JUST THE RIGHT time to save us
      2. We can now see how to progression of world empires, leading to the Roman empire of turn-of-the-millennium Palestine had laid the groundwork for Jesus to come, accomplish his work without getting killed too early, or without being dismissed by globalized technology.
      3. The Greek enlightenment produced great thinkers and philosophers such as
        - a. Socrates
        - b. Aristotle
        - c. Plato
        - d. Epicurious
      4. Common Greek language
        - a. After the Babylonian exile (returning around the time of Malachi) most returning Jews no longer spoke Hebrew
        - b. Dominant language shifted to Greek
        - c. Led to OT translation into GREEK! (Septuigent)
        - d. The Word of God for the first time translated into the common language of the known world
      5. The Pax Romana laid groundwork for the work and Gospel of Jesus to spread
      6. Roman road networks primed it so that the Gospel could spread like wildfire.
      7. God knew exactly what he was doing in the waiting.
      8. Though we can only see in hindsight.
        - a. In the meantime, we have to remember and trust.
        - b. Letting absence make our hearts grow fonder, not colder
        - c. And letting anticipation build patience and steadfastness... fanning into flame the embers of hope.
  - b. If you're into God, youre into waiting.
41. How are you waiting on God these days?
- a. Because you see, we're in the exact same spot
  - b. Jesus has promised us he's coming again.
    - i. Coming back for us.
    - ii. To save us.
    - iii. To make everything right.
  - c. But it's been a long time.
    - i. 400 years have come and gone 5 times.
    - ii. It was so long ago.
    - iii. Did God really say?
    - iv. Is he REALLY coming back for me?
    - v. He's been gone so long.
    - vi. The embers of our hope can grow cold and dim indeed as we wait for God to come back.
  - d. And we too can go through the motions at church and in our religion and practically LOSE HOPE
  - e. Are you going through the motions?

- f. Is your hope getting dim?
  - g. Have you gotten easily distracted? As you weary of waiting for your great love to return, oh Church?
    - i. Have you turned aside to substitutes? Other hopes, trusts, pleasures to fill the void?
    - ii. You don't have to bow down before a statue to worship idols, ladies and gentlemen
    - iii. We do it Every time we pursue STUFF, Status, or Sensuality to make life work
      - 1. For comfort.
      - 2. For pleasure
      - 3. For security.
    - iv. For most of us, our idols are our bank accounts.
      - 1. Our jobs
      - 2. Our trinkets.
      - 3. Even our families
  - h. But if you're into God, you're into waiting.
    - i. Waiting is hard.
      - i. Lots of waiting for the first Christmas – God's coming to his people!
      - ii. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Christmas seems long in coming too
        - 1. When Jesus will return to complete his rescue and redemption program
        - 2. And complete the installation of his Kingdom and rule
        - 3. It's still coming.
42. But take heart, God remembers.
- a. 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,<sup>[a]</sup> not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
  - b. Remember the Lord Sees Kairos long before we do. We see Chronos. He sees BOTH.
43. We can wait well.
- a. Are you waiting for Jesus?
  - b. The Son of Promise, the human who would defeat Satan and death and come to save us,
  - c. HE's COME
    - i. Jesus. God Incarnate.
    - ii. He lived a perfect life on our behalf. Died the death we should have died. So that in Him we might have the eternal life and love of God.
    - iii. Are you still waiting to put your trust in HIM? Why not decide today to hope in him.
    - iv. He's coming back, you know.
    - v. How will you respond to Him? To God's Word made flesh and blood.
44. How will Zechariah respond to God's word?
- a. This old, godly priest... who's lived so long in the waiting.
45. When will God himself come like he'd promised?
46. We'll tell that story, NEXT WEEK