

We are in the midst of a short series, examining two character traits Jesus impressed upon the Disciples, to prepare them for the birth of the Church, Pentecost, when God released the Holy Spirit to be our guide and counsellor, helping us to live as active witnesses of God's work in this world.

Last Sunday we looked at the Disciples' first test of faith, which was **separation** from Jesus when He ascended to Heaven. We observed, during their last Passover meal together, the Disciples displayed a very high degree of separation anxiety.

It was only when the Disciples spent time with the risen Christ, learning from Him, absorbing His teaching, accepting Him as God's promised Messiah, their separation anxiety was dispelled, were they able to *return to Jerusalem with great joy, and spent all their time in the Temple, praising God!*

Today we want to look at the second character building test, **waiting**, a test which also helps faith to grow.

Before His ascension, Jesus asked His disciples to do **three** things, which sounds like anxious parents telling their teenage children, *We are going out. While we are away, no parties, no friends staying over, AND we are not telling you when we will be back!*

Three things Jesus asked the Disciples to do were: to wait, prepare themselves to be His witnesses, and to live in positive hope: as you see me go, so you will see me return.

In our day and age, *waiting* is not something we like to do, nor do we actively encourage others to do. **Waiting**, we think, is being static, not going anywhere or doing something worthwhile, much like loitering and wasting time. We don't get paid for doing nothing, like the now infamous, "*zero hours contracts*"¹.

We try to teach our children to wait - *all good things come to those who wait*, we tell them, but at the very active and tender age of 3, 4, or 5, *waiting* is very difficult, especially when the chocolate cake on the counter is talking to you

¹ A **zero-hour contract** is a type of contract between an employer and a worker, where the employer is not obliged to provide any minimum working hours, while the worker is not obliged to accept any work offered. Depending on jurisdiction and conditions of employment, a zero-hour contract may differ from casual work - Wikipedia

every time you look at it! *Waiting* is very difficult, when as a teenager, your girlfriend keeps telling you, *wait!* *Waiting* is very difficult when at work we feel, we are neither recognised nor rewarded, and the promotion and the pay rise and the benefits, do not come when we want.

And *waiting* is **very** difficult when God says, *Not now; Not yet!*

Waiting is a time of faith-building. We find this principle right through human history. Noah waited 120 years building the ark, anticipating God's action, during which time his faith in God grew and sustained him, not just for the 40 days and nights of non-stop torrential rain, but for 370 days in the ark!

Abraham's journey of waiting and anticipating took him to Mount Moriah to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, during which time his faith in God grew and sustained him.

Moses waited on God's every move as he negotiated with the Pharaoh for the release of God's people from slavery to freedom. His faith in God grew, even when he made disastrous decisions. History has noted, Moses was known as God's friend²!

Waiting on God is a spiritual discipline, and one worth cultivating. To wait on God is to learn an important aspect of communication: to listen.

As time goes on and we think God has not replied, we tend to pray like David's prayer of frustration³:

How long will you forget me, Lord?

How long will you hide from me? Forever?

How long must I worry?

How long must I feel sad in my heart?

How long will my enemy win over me?

Lord, look at me. Answer me, my God. Tell me, or I will die.

Otherwise my enemy will say, "I have won!"

Those against me will rejoice that I've been defeated.

I trust in Your love. My heart is happy because You saved me. I sing to the Lord because He has taken care of me.

² Exodus 33:11

³ Psalm 13

To prayerfully wait on God, is to wait for the Holy Spirit to move, and then follow Him.

AND, we don't wait without purpose. We wait with hope - *as you have seen Jesus go, expect to see Him return the same way.* This hope is not in vain, because what we hope for will be accomplished.

AND as we wait with the assured hope of His return, we are to be a ready witness of God's work in this world. We are cautioned against falling for those who call the date and time when God will return and restore eternal His Kingdom, nor are we to spent time speculating when this will happen.

Our task, should we decide to accept it, is to be a witness of God at work in this His world. The work of the Holy Spirit is to **dwell (live)** with us, and be **in** us, *teaching us **all** things and bring to our memory, **all** Jesus has taught us⁴*, that we may be witness of God at work in this our world.

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' ascension to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of the father⁵, we recognise and accept, we are in a time of waiting, waiting for Jesus to return, the same way the Apostles saw Him ascend to Heaven, and restore us to God's kingdom.

Don't let *waiting* pull you down. Let times of waiting build your faith in God, and in His purposes.

AMEN

⁴ John 14:26

⁵ Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2. 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21; Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:33