

Lamentations 3:22-33 & Mark 5:21-43 – July 1, 2018

My daughter is... impatient. Actually, that's kind of an understatement. She's downright demanding. I'm sure this is true of most 4 year olds. But it seems especially true of my daughter. Because it's been like this since the day she was born.

When she was hungry, she had to eat... now. When she was wet, she needed her diaper changed... now. And even today, she's never been one of those “me do, me do” kids. The kind that insist on doing everything for themselves. No, if she wants something and she knows you can do it faster than her, she will insist that you do it for her. Because she wants it done... now.

But maybe this impatience that we see in children is just an amplified version of what we all experience. Human beings are not patient creatures. We can learn a certain amount of self control over our words and actions. But our thoughts are still just as impatient as a child's. We do not like to wait. Not on ourselves and our own frailties. Not on others and their own limitations.

And, most especially not on God. I mean, why should we have to wait on him? He created the universe in 6 days. He brought light from darkness with a word. He gave Adam life with a single breath. Shouldn't he be able to answer my prayers the moment that I make them? Shouldn't he be able to give me everything that I need... right now?

I doubt any of us is actually quite that demanding of God in our prayers. But we are impatient. And we certainly look at waiting on the Lord as a burden to carry. We may accept grudgingly that God will work in his own time and his own way, but that doesn't make us happy about it. And it certainly doesn't make it any easier for us to endure.

Yet, that's still off the mark in many ways. Take a look at our Old Testament Lesson: *“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”* It is good to wait. It is not a burden. It is not a punishment. It is not a curse. It is good to wait. It is a blessing when God makes us wait.

How many of you woke up this morning and said, “Thank you God for NOT answering my prayers?” It's completely counter-intuitive. And yet, that's really what we see Jesus doing in our Gospel Lesson.

The man who's forced to wait in this story is Jairus. And Jairus has reason to be impatient. His daughter is sick. Very, very sick. And you can see that Jairus is in an absolute panic. He is a ruler of the synagogue. A man of power and prestige and influence. And yet he runs up to Jesus and grovels on his hands and knees. Begging Him, “My little girl is dying. Please. Come quickly.”

But Jesus doesn't go quickly. He lets the crowd follow Him. Pressing in on Him. Slowing Him down. When it comes to escaping a crowd unnoticed and unfollowed, Jesus is capable of being an absolute ninja. But He doesn't do that here. He heads toward Jairus' house at a snail's pace.

Which had to have been bad enough for the desperate father. But it gets worse. All of a sudden, Jesus stops. Dead in his tracks. He looks around at the crowd of people pushed in on him from every side and says, “Who touched me?” Who touched you? There are a hundred people touching you. Why are we stopping? Let's go Jesus. My daughter is dying!

But Jesus won't budge. “Nope. Somebody touched me. And we're not leaving until they fess' up.” Finally, after what had to have been an agonizingly long wait, a woman comes forward. She too had been waiting. Waiting for healing from a condition that made her an exile from society and which only seemed to get worse as time went on.

She steps forward, trembling with fear, falls at his feet, and tells Jesus the truth. She probably thought He was going to be angry with her. But Jesus isn't angry. “Calm down. You're fine. Your faith has healed you. Go in peace. You don't have to worry about your illness anymore.”

It was a wonderfully comforting word and a wonderful act of healing. That, at any other time, would have made perfect sense. But there's a little girl's life at stake here. And pretty soon, they realize what all the waiting has brought them. Messengers from Jairus' house arrive. His daughter is dead. There's nothing that Jesus can do now. He's waited too long.

That's at least what they think. Which probably makes it utterly baffling to Jairus and his men, when it's at this moment that Jesus finally decides to hurry up. "Come on guys! We gotta go! Don't be afraid. Just believe! Peter, James, John. Just you three. Come with us. Everybody else stay behind. I don't wanna get slowed down."

They get to the house. The town has gathered in mourning for the girl's death. The entire downstairs is filled with people. Jesus tells them she's not dead, only asleep. And, of course, they laugh at him. So what does he do?

He throws them out. "Get out of my way. I've got a job to do here, and you're just slowing me down. If you're not going to help, then just leave." He gets up to her room. He takes her by the hand. And He tells her. "Little girl, get up." And she wakes up. Not just alive. But healthy. And walking around. And hungry. Just like normal.

All that waiting. All that panic. All that suffering. What did it get Jairus? Nothing. Not a single thing. Nothing more or less than what God already had in store for Him. Jairus could run out in front of Jesus, begging Him to move faster. He could lag behind sorrowfully, asking what's the point. And the result would be the same. An act of God. Resurrection to new life.

It is good to wait for the Lord. It is not a burden. Or a punishment. Or a curse. It is a blessing. Because waiting on the Lord is the very substance of faith.

We will all face suffering in this life. As our Old Testament lesson says, we will bear the yoke, we will sit alone under our burden, we will bury our face in the dust, we will be struck down, we will be filled with disgrace. All of these things are a guarantee of this sinful world we live in. An affliction and grief that the Lord does not bring upon us willingly. But it does happen.

Yet we are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though the Lord brings grief, He will also show compassion. His love for us is great. It is an unfailing love. And that's where faith comes in. That's where waiting comes in. His love for us is unceasing. His mercies never come to an end. Great is His faithfulness. And the longer we wait on the Lord, the more real that becomes for us.

If Jairus had come to Jesus and said, "My daughter is sick," and Jesus had sprinted to his house in order to find the girl at her last breath and then healed her, what would Jairus have learned? That Jesus can heal the sick? He already knew that. That's why he went to Jesus in the first place.

But by waiting just those few extra minutes, Jesus came to the house and showed Jairus something so much greater. Jesus showed him that He had power not just over life, but over death itself. Jesus showed him that He could heal not just a sick little girl, but he could also heal mankind from the disease of sin and death. That he could bring us out of the grave.

That is the blessing of waiting on the Lord. It's the blessing of praying, "Lord, I know you can heal this temporary problem of my mortal body. But what I really need most is for you to heal this eternal problem of my immortal soul. So I will wait through life and death and life again to find the answer to my prayer. Because it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

And then we wait. Not because we have to. Not because it's a burden or a punishment or a curse. We wait because, like Jairus, the Lord is walking by our side. He is doing miracles all around us. And if we walk with Him and we wait with Him and we trust in Him. Even when the world says, "Go home. There is no hope." If we wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. He will do a miracle for us as well. Amen.