

## Where's the Waiter?

Good morning church, so excited to be bringing the word this morning. Ps Luis will be preaching a great message next week, but for today, you've got me, and I'm believing that it'll bless you today.

This is Pentecost Sunday, which means that it's 50 days after Easter and we celebrate when the Holy Spirit descended onto the disciples, changing the very nature of church and our existence because we now have the Holy Spirit. So this morning, I'm going to read a bit of Acts 1 where it talks about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then we're going to talk about restaurants, and by the end, my goal is that you would be inspired in whatever you're going through and especially in whatever you're waiting on God for.

The question, and the title, for today is "Where's the Waiter?"

Pray

Acts 1:4-5

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Verse 8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After this, Jesus ascends into heaven, and 10 days later, in Acts 2, as the disciples were gathering, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

But I want to take a step back. In Acts 1:4, Jesus tells His disciples to NOT leave Jerusalem but to WAIT. In verse 8, He tells them that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit fills them and that they would go to Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Basically, Jesus says that they had to WAIT, to NOT go anywhere, but then at the right time, when the Holy Spirit had arrived and they were baptised in the Holy Spirit, then they would go. But for now, it was wait. They had to just... wait.

And I don't know about you, but waiting is the worst. Everyone hates waiting. We hate waiting in line, we hate waiting for people, we hate waiting for service, we hate waiting for YouTube to load and the ads to finish. Waiting is the worst. But sometimes, we need to wait. We need to wait for God's timing, we need to wait for God's instruction, we need to wait for God to line things up for us in just the right way.

How's your waiting? Because I know it's not enjoyable, but we still have to do it. If we want to be all that God has called us to be, if we want to achieve the things God has called us to achieve, then we need to wait. Because sometimes, we know that we're meant to go to the ends of the earth, but God tells us to wait and to not go anywhere.

See the disciples knew that they had this destiny, this future, this purpose, this incredible journey and adventure ahead of them, I mean think about it – they had just seen Jesus rise from the dead, they had seen scripture and prophecy fulfilled, they were in the greatest state of their lives, ready to take on the world, and Jesus tells them to wait.

Waiting is difficult when we think we're ready. It's fine when we know we're not. If you have to give a speech in front of really important people and you're not prepared, if someone says that there's a delay, that's a good thing, because you're not ready. But when you think you're ready, when you've done everything you know to do and you're good to go, then waiting becomes frustrating. And the disciples were ready in every way except in the one way that they had no control over. They had learned, they had been discipled, they were equipped, they knew Jesus – but they didn't have the Holy Spirit. They couldn't force the Holy Spirit to be with them, they couldn't demand the Holy Spirit to fill them, they had no power over the timing of God. They just had to wait. When you've done all that you can do and you just have to wait, it can be frustrating.

So how's your waiting?

When I was still studying, my first job was as a waiter. Any waiters or former waiters out there? Go the hospitality industry. As a waiter, I would have to wear an apron because it helped identify us to customers, and we'd keep our little notepads to take orders in the pockets, and it was just like a little uniform.

From the outside, you would think that waiters have a pretty easy job. You just take orders and bring food out to people. See the restaurant I worked at, they were a small family run business and they didn't pay great or anything, but they really wanted to impress. So we were trained to have really good customer service, to really make sure people were well looked after and were taken care of. This wasn't like a fast food place, this was an imitation classy restaurant. You'd know whether you did well or not because you'd see how much people tipped. On a good night, you'd get \$30-\$40 per person, between about 5 people, and 20 years ago, that was a lot of money.

See in Acts 1:5, when Jesus says to stay and wait, He uses the Greek word *perimeno*. And *perimeno* means to wait conscientiously. Be steadfast, to not go anywhere properly. There's a method to the waiting, an intentionality about it, an active waiting.

Sometimes we think of waiting like being bored and just doing nothing, as if to wait is to be inactive and disengaged. You know, I'm waiting, so I'm just going to go on my phone and check Instagram.

But what Jesus says is to be actively waiting, do it conscientiously, wait meticulously and diligently. I realise as I'm saying this that it's incredibly difficult to do because who wants to put EFFORT into waiting. But, that's what Jesus asks us to do.

So it's time to put our aprons on and wait.

Luke 17:7

“Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? Won't he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’?”

So much to take out of this verse, but do you realise that waiting on God is part of serving Him? This servant, this person whose life is about serving God, has to wait on Him. Waiting on God is part of serving God. So rather than dismiss the waiting, we need to realise that waiting on God is serving Him, it's a part of it and we can't dismiss it as less important as all the other flashy ways that we can serve Him.

So as a waiter, one of the first things that you need to do is that you need to ask the right questions. When you go to serve them, you ask them what they want.

Throughout the bible, too many scriptures to reference, we see people inquiring of the Lord again and again and again. Because they ask God what He wants. They ask Him what His will is.

When we wait on God, we need to ask Him what HE wants. You know what you don't do as a waiter, is that you don't tell people what they want. You don't say, “you want to order this dish and get that coffee”. You don't tell them, you ask them. The other thing you don't do is you don't ignore them. You don't not talk to the person you're serving, you need to talk to them. What does God want for our lives? What are the purposes of God for us? It's the purpose God has given us, not the purpose want God to give us.

And sometimes, we just need to start off by going to God and asking Him what He wants. Inquire of God, ask Him while you're waiting, don't ignore Him, don't get stuck in the frustration of waiting and ignore Him, inquire of Him.

One of the most annoying things for the kitchen staff, not so much the wait staff, was when people asked for something that was customised. Maybe it was on the menu but they altered it, or it was just something specific that wasn't on the menu, or if there's a deal or a set and they want to change things. As wait staff though, we just listened to them and said ‘yes, sure thing, no problem’ and wrote down whatever they asked for. Because if they're the customer and they're paying for it, if we can make it, they can have it. It's not my job as a waiter to question what they're asking for, it's not for me to tell them that what they want isn't something I would like, my personal preference or feelings on what they've requested isn't for me to disagree with.

If I'm waiting on them, I need to let them have their way, even if I don't understand why they're asking for it or if I disagree with what they're asking for. Because remember, we're waiting on God, we're not living our own lives, doing our own thing, we're trusting God with our lives and letting Him direct us, so even if I don't understand, even if what He says or asks of me doesn't make sense, I still need to do it.

Job 38 – 40 is this incredible response that God gives to Job after everything Job had gone through. And essentially, God asks him a whole bunch of rhetorical questions that say, “God knows more than you do.”

In 38:2, God asks Job – “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” 40:2, “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? Let Him who accuses God answer Him!”

Isaiah 55:8,9

““For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Sometimes when we're waiting on God, we're really just complaining about God. It's so easy for us to just complain about the way God wants us to do things. Imagine you order something at a restaurant and the waiter tells you, “No, that's not how I'd do it. I don't think you really want that. You're making a big mistake, so I don't think I'll get that for you. Choose something else.” That's pretty upsetting to hear.

But sometimes, that's what we do with God. Well, sometimes that's what I do with God. Ok, often, I do that with God. I think I know better, my plan makes more sense, I have a strategy and a solution to everything, so when God says to do it a different way, when God says that I don't get to have it the way I want it done, I just refuse. I just become obstinate and stand there, waiting for God to change His mind. Which ultimately, just delays things for even longer.

But when we're waiting on God, and He asks us to do something that doesn't make sense, well, His thoughts and His ways are higher than ours, He knows what's best even if we don't agree. And our job as a waiter is to make it happen anyway.

This has only ever happened to me one time at a restaurant, and it was a relatively fancy restaurant, but they deserve all the accolades they get because of this.

I'm a bit strange, I don't know why I'm like this, but I'm right handed in everything, except when I use cutlery. For whatever reason, I hold a knife in my left hand and a fork in my right. Not sure where it came from, but that's what I grew up with. So when you go to a restaurant, cutlery is usually set up for right handed eating because that's just the majority of people, so that's fine, I'm used to just swapping them when I sit down and it's all good.

Now you know that this restaurant is fancy because after every course, they would give you a new set of cutlery. Most restaurants, you get one spoon for the entire night, and if you need a fork, it costs you extra. But this was a fancy restaurant where they would take away used cutlery, and even the cutlery that you didn't use because you didn't know what it was for, and replace it with a new set for the next course.

And what really impressed me at this restaurant was that after the first course, the waiter noticed that I was eating left handed, and from the next course onwards, they set my cutlery the opposite way around. I was with Aileen and she would get her set for right handed, and mine would be for left handed. They didn't say anything, they didn't make a scene or anything, they just did it automatically. First and only time that's ever happened to me. But I loved that they were paying so much attention that they noticed even the smallest of differences, something that I would never have expected of them or complained about, it wouldn't have been any kind of negative experience had they not done anything, but the fact that they did something was just incredible.

Mark 7:14

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.”

Mark 9:7, at the transfiguration, “Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!””

Heb 12:2 tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus

In the waiting, we need to pay attention to Jesus. We need to be listening, staying aware, notice what's happening and be in tune with God and what He's doing. When we're waiting for God, He doesn't want us to be idle, He wants us to pay attention to what He's doing, even if we can't hurry the process or do anything to influence it one way or another, He still wants us to pay attention and be aware of what He's doing.

Luke 12:56

“You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?”

You know how the weather keeps changing, but we check the weather, we look at the sky, and even though there's nothing we can do about the actual temperature, but we prepare ourselves for it? Whether that's to bring an umbrella or to have a jacket in the car, we can't control the actual weather, but we can be aware of it and prepare for it. Well, Jesus is saying the same thing about our circumstances, broadly, about the state of the world, but also individually and the state of our lives. He wants us to be aware of what's happening and what's going on. When we know it's going to rain, we don't just stand in the rain and hope that it stops, we prepare for it.

And when we know that God is up to something, doing something on our behalf, when we know that God has a specific plan in place or a person that He wants us to connect with, then we need to prepare for it. Not wait, doing nothing, but knowing things are proceeding and happening, we need to prepare.

And we can only do that when we're paying attention, noticing the details, having discernment, and being aware of what God is up to.

**Even if we can't do anything about the process, we can prepare for the product.**

Most restaurants these days will have a dessert menu. And the reason that there's a dessert menu is because there is an order of things in a meal. I know that there are some people out there who really don't go along with the order of things and have dessert first and all of that, but I'm assuming that none of you are like that because that's just another level of strange, and that like most people, you'd eat entrees, mains, then desserts.

Dessert menus only come out after the mains. As I waiter, I can't go up to the customer and say, "I know you haven't had your entrees yet, but dessert is faster so I'm going to serve it to you first." Because there's an order of things, there's a method, you can't upset the order of things because it's more convenient. It's like we're trying to hurry them along, but really, it's not what they've asked for, it's not what they want. There's a system to it, and it's not about convenience.

John 11

We read in this chapter about Jesus and Lazarus. We read that Jesus receives word that Lazarus is sick and that they want Jesus to heal him, and in verse 6, it says, "So when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days."

We then read later on that while Jesus was still there, He receives another message that Lazarus was dead.

When Jesus finally gets to Lazarus, Lazarus has been dead and buried for 4 days, and then Jesus calls out his name, and Lazarus comes back to life.

Now this is an incredible miracle because Jesus literally raises Lazarus from the dead, like he's been really dead, 4 days dead. But you know what? It was an inconvenient miracle.

If it were up to me, it would have made much more sense for Jesus to hear that Lazarus was sick, leave straight away, get there before Lazarus died, and then he'd be healed, and all is well.

But Jesus decides to stay for two days. He delays it. He is seemingly wasting time. And when Jesus finds out that Lazarus is dead, if I were one of the disciples, I'd be like, "I told you we should've left earlier. Now he's dead. We missed the opportunity for an amazing healing, and now it's too late."

But it's because Jesus had a bigger miracle in mind, He had something greater intended for Lazarus. And sometimes, the order of things isn't convenient or time effective, but it needs to happen in that order. Lazarus had to be dead for him to be raised to life. It's not convenient. It's not efficient. But as Jesus puts it, that's how we see the glory of God.

In the waiting, we can't disrupt the process. If we want to see the fullness of God's glory, we need to not force things in because it feels convenient, because it's taking too long, because we want things to hurry along so it can all be done. We need to allow each step to be complete.

Maybe you're waiting on that relationship that God has promised you but it's just not happening the way you want it to, and you feel the desire to circumvent the whole process, find a short cut, make it easier and quicker, but sometimes, we just need to follow the process. Get the entrees before the mains and the mains before dessert. Rather than trying to get to the end product, to conclude the whole situation, focus on what needs to happen now, make the 'now steps' happen, get yourself ready, put yourself in the right places, doing the right things, develop yourself into the person who God needs you to be as an individual. Get the entrée right first.

The best feeling at the end of a shift was when I did really well at a table, they would thank us, pay their bill, and leave a generous tip.

See if we're good at the waiting, we will get the reward. God does not skip out on the bill. Whatever He's asked us to do, whatever He's asked us to wait on Him for, He will be faithful in keeping His promises, in rewarding us, in looking after us.

1 Cor 3:8

"The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor."

Col 3:24

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Eph 6:8

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.”

When we wait on God well, God rewards us. See we can wait with an attitude that just wants everything to be over, and I get that, because we all want it to be done and to just get to the end immediately, but we can change how we wait. Rather than wait and be bitter and take a step back, we can wait and be active and wait conscientiously, with intention, waiting on God to serve Him, waiting on God to listen, to pay attention, to see what He needs, to obey.

And God is always faithful. God will reward us, He will make sure that whatever we're waiting for will be delivered, He won't ever short change us, even if the waiting seems long, even if the serving seems hard, God will reward us, God sees what we've done, our commitment, our generosity, our dedication, and He rewards it. He never abandons or dismisses or neglects us and the labour that we've done.

And even more incredible is that God gives us generous tips.

Luke 16:10

““Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”

Matthew 25:28-29

‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

When God sees that we're faithful in our waiting, that we're active, that we're engaging in serving Him while we wait, and God sees that He can trust us with the little, He gives us more. Not more that we've earned or more that we deserve, but more on top of what He's already given and promised. He gives us beyond what we expected and we thought we were receiving. But we need to be faithful with the little. We need to be faithful in the waiting, we need to be trustworthy with what we have and God will give us more.

Like I said at the start, the restaurant I worked at was just a small establishment, nothing too fancy, just a nice little place, pretty typical everyday kind of restaurant.

But you know there are really fancy restaurants out there. I mean, these are rated with Michelin stars, chef hats, and people travel internationally just to eat at them. The chefs are famous, go on TV shows, they charge crazy prices.

Most of them though, have what they call a degustation. It sounds like disgusting, but it's actually delicious. And what happens at a degustation is completely unacceptable at a normal restaurant.

But at these fine dining restaurants, it's expected. And what happens is that at a degustation, you're given a price, a number of courses, and that's it. Not the actual courses, not what you're getting, you don't get to choose anything, you just have to pay what they've asked, and you don't get a say in it.

They'll say something like, 9 courses for \$350 per person, and you just accept it. That's what you're getting and that's how much it is. And when each dish comes out, it's tiny. Like smaller than the palm of your hand.

And you would think that a restaurant that charges heaps of money, has tiny portions, and doesn't let you pick would be a terrible idea and that you'd hate it.

But a good fine dining restaurant totally impresses you. They say 9 courses, but they give you palette cleansers and appetisers and all these extra things throughout the meal, so there's really like 15. They make sure that your water glass is never empty, the waiters explain every single detail of everything that you're eating so you're never confused, they will take your jacket when you come in and return your jacket before you leave, they'll fold your napkin if you get up, they give you a combination of flavours that you don't think you'll like, but it ends up being amazing, they make sure your table is clean, they clear your plates after every dish, you're basically treated like royalty and they look after you amazingly well.

But the reason this works, the reason that they're able to get away with all of this without you having any input whatsoever, is because they're trustworthy. You trust them. You allow them to do whatever they want because they treat you right and they're trustworthy in all their suggestions, in everything they do.

See God is looking for trustworthy people. When we are trustworthy with the small, when we're able to do those little things well, when we can honour Him in our waiting, when we're listening, in tune with Him, when God can trust us to wait on Him well, He gives us more. When we're able to be obedient to God before He even asks us to be obedient to Him, when we're able to trust when things don't make sense, when we're able to know God's heart, when we serve God well, God rewards us with more.

Acts 13:22

God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

God's looking for people after His own heart, people who are in tune with God's heart, who reflect God's heart in their own lives. And it's when we have that heart that God knows that He can trust us with more. It's when we go from waiting on God, with uncertainty but obedience, with confusion but with consistency, with frustration but with faithfulness, and transition into a place where we're just after God's heart. Where we just pursue Him and His desires and in His way, where our hearts are in tune with His, where there's symmetry, so rather than feeling conflicted, we're at peace just serving Him, waiting on Him, and obeying Him.

So how's your waiting?

Isaiah 40:31

"But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."

That word wait, in Hebrew, is qavah, which also has a similar connotation. It means to wait eagerly, to have a purpose for the waiting, not just waiting around, but waiting for or on something or someone.

When we wait with intentionality and purpose, when we are active in our waiting, our strength is renewed. Think about it for a second. Waiting inactively is tiring. It's demotivating, it makes you weary and lazy and you don't feel like doing anything. But active waiting brings a sense of purpose, of progress, of anticipation and hope, it renews our strength, it gives us motivation and it helps us persevere, even when it's difficult.

It's like when you plan for a holiday, you can either wait and do nothing for it, just waiting for the day to come, suffering until it happens, or you can plan. You can meticulously look at reviews and places to go and things to do and accommodation and flights, which just brings a sense of excitement.

Either way, the holiday is coming, but you can either be active, find better deals, make it a better and more exciting experience, or you can just wait inactively and let it just happen to you.

See either way, God is faithful. He will deliver on His promises, He will come through, your situation will change. But you can either suffer through the waiting, or you can be active in it, receiving greater rewards. Not that it changes God's faithfulness, but it grows your character, it grows your intimacy with God, it changes your perspective, it brings strength, it brings joy, it brings a greater level of perseverance and endurance through the process.