

Track 5: I Will Wait - Psalm 130

Norwalk Christian Church, March 29, 2020 - Live Stream, Mixtape Series, Lent 5, Year A

I wait...wait and wait and wait.

An appropriate Psalm for us right now. When we planned this sermon series, it was a different world. Yet it's been amazing how closely these Psalms have spoken to where we find ourselves.

Out of the depths I cry to you.

Have you had a breaking point, yet? A moment yet when you feel closed in...where you can't believe this is the life we are living right now? A moment when you just want to throw caution to the wind and act as if all is still normal? A moment where you feel like those watchmen from days gone by, positioned on the city walls, up all night, the night seemingly going on and on, as you stare and wait for dawn.

Will dawn ever come? Will the sun rise again? Will our waiting soon be over?

Psalm 130 is a part of a collection, 15 Psalms each labeled in the text as "A song of ascent." We don't know exactly what that means, but we have some ideas. The thought is that each of these Psalms were sung by worshippers traveling to Jerusalem for a festival. Pilgrims, journeying from their towns, ascending up to the Holy City.

See, Jerusalem, like our church building, actually, was set up on a hill. Like when we travel to our church building, you can't get to Jerusalem to worship without going up.

These pilgrimages would take days or weeks for some. And as they travelled, ascending the hill, they would sing Psalms along the way. These 15 songs of ascent are each different, a mixtape of emotion. Some joyful. Some sadder laments. Others, like ours, are mixed...a lament, but also a song of hope.

Can you imagine travelers, journeying together, each singing a different song, yet their roads joining together, merging as they travel, blending their songs and emotions, as they journey to worship? All of us sing different songs as we approach worship. Each time, emotions change, but the journey still brings us up as we sing. Those are the songs of Ascent.

I imagine our song being sung right in the middle of a long journey. Maybe after a particularly dark, cloudy night, with a haze that blocks the moonlight and seems to push away the dawn.

A night that seems like it's not going to end. My soul waits...waits...and waits...and waits for the Lord. More than those who watch for the morning. She sings it again, more than those who watch for the morning. When will this journey be over so I can celebrate?

We've been pairing up our Psalms during this worship series with modern songs, a modern Mixtape of emotions. Our song today is from the band Mumford and Sons, "I Will Wait". I will wait, I will wait for you, the song sings...building in expectation as the song progresses.

I'd play the song for you, but last week the Facebook algorithms flagged our live feed for possible copyright violations...soooooo, I will encourage you to just go listen to the song yourself. We can post a link to the video.

The lyrics begin:

*Well I came home - Like a stone
And I fell heavy into your arms
These days of dust - Which we've known
Will blow away with this new sun
But I'll kneel down - Wait for now
And I'll kneel down - Know my ground
And I will wait, I will wait for you.*

Lovers, separated by work or travel. I will wait, I will wait for you. Family, separated by miles. I will wait, I will wait for you. Friends, separated by social distance. I will wait, I will wait for you. Loved ones, separated by death. I will wait, I will wait for you. We know what it means to wait, to wait for someone.

But this kind of waiting, it's not the annoyance of waiting for someone when you're in a hurry, when someone is just taking their dear sweet time and you have other things to do.

This Hebrew word, translated "wait" for us, is about tense expectation, not annoyance. It's longing, that longing to be with someone, so much you can hardly stand it. This kind of waiting is painful, but it's worth it...because the one you're waiting for is worth it.

But it's not a lover the Psalmist is waiting for. She waits for the Lord. Perhaps she feels distant from God. Perhaps she feels like this journey to Jerusalem has gone on too long, and wonders why can't she just experience God right where she is. Why all the waiting?

But in the midst of the wait, she makes an affirmation. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities--if you should keep a tally of our wrongdoings--who among us could stand? That list would be too long to bear.

But with God, there is no tally, she sings. There is only forgiveness.

The song begins to build, as she sings out--O Israel, hope in the Lord! The waiting is worth it. For with the Lord there is steadfast love! With the Lord there is great power to redeem!

Too often, we feel distant from God. But the good news in this Psalm is that God is never distant from us. As we wait, God waits with us. When we feel far off, God comes near. When we are overburdened by our list of wrongdoings, God gives steadfast love. And when we think the dark night of our soul will never end, God shines the light of a new dawn.

Church, I know we're doing a lot of waiting right now. And what makes it hardest, perhaps, is that we don't know how long our waiting will last. When can we emerge? Be at coffee time together at a crowded table. Worship in the same pew. When can we sit together in living rooms or in a restaurant? When can we shake hands and hug? When will life return back to normal...or when will our new normal emerge?

We are waiting...waiting...waiting. At times, it feels like that annoying waiting...like this is dragging on for too long, why can't things just hurry up.

But I encourage you to find hope in your waiting. Hope, that all this waiting--it's worth it. It's worth it for the sake of our collective health and good, yes. But it's also worth it because...well, these things we are waiting for...they're worth the wait.

The people in our lives--friends, family, church family--they are worth it. And so we wait with hope.

Because no matter how long the night may feel, dawn always--always--comes. And no matter how alone we may be on our journey, the road leads up, and God journeys with us the whole way.

*These days of dust - Which we've known
Will blow away with this new sun.*

O Norwalk Christian Church--keep waiting--but wait with hope, church.

Hope in the Lord!

For with the Lord there is steadfast love and great power to redeem.

Amen.