

400 Silent Years

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Just Wait

Robert Morris --- August 12, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace. I'm glad to be with you this morning.

Today as we continue our year through the Bible I have the privilege of talking about a very unique part of the Bible in the history of God's redemptive plan. It's sometimes referred to or often referred to as the 400 silent years. As we're going to see today, the God of the universe is doing something even in the silence.

Now in order to get us in the right frame of mind I'd love to share a story with you from recent Morris family history. Last summer Lauren and I had the opportunity to take our kids to the beach. And thanks to the generosity of some friends, we were going to be able to go to a really nice beach in Florida. And my kids at the time were seven and five, and so we knew that the most daunting task before us was going to be the drive. But we had a great plan in the weeks leading up to leaving for this trip. But as we got closer, we noticed that a tropical storm was set to come through south Louisiana on the same day that we were set to go there. So, we had to scramble and we had to change plans. We had to head up north towards I-20, so a big workaround and add an extra, maybe four or five hours to our trip.

Now we did all kinds of things. We told our children, "Really, this is how long we're going to drive each day, this is about what time we'll stop for lunch." And in love we geared them up with every gadget and tablet and toy and coloring book and snacks that you could possibly imagine for the back seat.

And I bet you know where this is going. Do you want to know how long it was before one of the Morris children uttered those infamous words that every child has spoken and every parent has heard: "Are we there yet?" My best recollection is three and a half hours down the road we got our first "Are we there yet?"

Now some of you just heard me say three and a half hours and you're very much thinking, *Robert, tell me your secrets. How did you get that long?*

Now in spite of all our efforts, the best my children could wait until they had to be questioned whether I could be trusted to do what I said I could do was three and a half hours. There were times during the drive when I could look back in the rearview mirror and see the doubt beginning to form in my children's minds. I could see their impatience and frustration growing. "Dad, this doesn't look anything like the beach." *Are you sure you're headed in the right direction, old man? Can I really trust this guy driving to get me to the destination he promised?* "Why can't you make it go faster, Dad, so we don't have to wait so long?"

And there were times in that moment that I had to come up with different responses so I didn't go crazy myself. Sometimes it was "Not yet" or "Just a little while longer." "Please be patient." There were sometimes I just flat out ignored their questions and sat there in silence.

But there were so many times during this drive that I said to my children, "Just wait. Just wait—it's going to be worth it."

The Ending of the Old Testament

It's this very feeling, this atmosphere, that we find ourselves in as we turn the page from the Old Testament to the New.

Over the first half of the year, we've been journeying through the history of the people of Israel, the entire Old Testament. And we've been on a roller coaster ride of high highs and low lows. We've heard the promises that God has made to Abraham and to Moses and to David, all part of His sovereignty and plan as He's working out redemptive history. And frankly, where we've been the last few weeks, things are looking better than they have in a lot of years. Many of the people are back in the land after returning from exile. They've been allowed to rebuild the wall and the temple in the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah. They've done their timeout in Babylon and Persia and now they're returning to the land. And many of them are thinking, *Is this when we are going to be re-established as a people? It won't be long now.*

Now as we come to the end of the Old Testament, one of the things we need to remember is that the people of God do not know that this is the end of the Old Testament. They don't know the future that's in store for them. They know the promises, but they don't know the timing of those promises. And the last couple of chapters of the Book of Malachi, one of the last prophets

to speak to the people of Israel, they are full of stern warnings, but they are also full of a lot of hope of what's to come.

The prophet Malachi is going to speak to the people. And if you have a Bible and you want to turn there with us today, that's where we're going to start out in just a moment. He was part of the group of prophets that were the last to officially speak to the people of Israel in that same time period as their return from exile.

I'd like to give you a glimpse of the highlights of last two chapters of Malachi, so you can understand how the Old Testament ends.

In **Malachi chapter 3, verse 1**, it starts this way: **“See, I will send a messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly, the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the LORD Almighty.”**

There's a messenger coming and the people might have been wondering, *Is that you, Malachi, or should we be expecting someone pretty soon here?*

The Lord we seek, the Messiah, He's going to come to His temple, the messenger of the covenant.

Great. I hope it's in my lifetime.

In Malachi 3, verse 6, Malachi reminds the people of God's faithfulness. In **Malachi 3:6** it says, **“I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”** *I don't change, God says. In spite of all of your unfaithfulness, even some of the unfaithfulness that Malachi is describing in his book, I'm not changing. I will keep my promises.*

And the last chapter of **Malachi** starts like this, **chapter 4, verse 1**: **“‘Surely the day is coming: it's going to burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and evildoers will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the LORD Almighty.”** Here it is. Surely the day is coming. Judgment is coming for those who stand against Yahweh God and good things for those of us who have been faithful. There's certainty in this. It's going to happen.

And then the Old Testament ends with one command and then a promise. **Chapter 4, verse 4 of Malachi** says—Malachi reminds them: **“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees that I gave him at Horeb for all of Israel.”** Malachi instructs the people to remember. And this isn't just a mental exercise. He is calling them to action, a certain kind of

living. *Would you please remember the law of Moses? He gave us the commands. If we will live this way, things will go well for us in the land. Don't forget.*

And the Old Testament ends like this, the last two verses, verses 5 and 6: **“See, I will send you a prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”**

So, this great prophet is going to come. He's going to be doing a restorative work. He's going to be making things right. He's going to be putting things back in the right order. He's going to be in the business of fixing hearts and turning hearts back to God.

Now, as you hear these passages, if you can, put yourself in the first hearers' shoes. They might be wondering, *Great, Malachi! I'm excited. When is this going to happen? And like...next week? Maybe next year? Surely not more than a couple of years, right, Malachi? We're ready. We're ready for God to do what He said He would do.*

And the Old Testament ends in this expectation to come, waiting for this fuller revelation of a new kingdom, a new Messiah, a new Son of David to return to the throne.

The Israelites Enter a Time of Waiting

And then it just stops. No more prophets speaking. No more official word from God, and for hundreds of years ... hundreds of years. To put that into a context that we might understand, it's been 150-something days since that Friday that everything changed in the city of Austin in regards to the COVID crisis. One hundred and fifty days and we are so tired of it. And we're talking about hundreds of years where the people of God, the faithful ones of God, had to have wondered if God would deliver on His promise. Because it is not looking like it.

It's been a really long drive already and every month and every year that passes, it looks like the promises of God are not coming true. There's no king from David's line yet and there's year after year of despair, oppression, and a loss of identity. And the clock keeps ticking, and nothing. And every now and then there's a small glimmer of hope, but then it's quickly dashed.

Overview of the 400 Years between the Testaments

Now I do think it's important for you today to understand some of the things that happen from a historical perspective over this time period. I want to set the table for the following weeks as we start the New Testament next week. And so, I'd like to give you just a 30,000-foot view of about 400 years of history in a couple of minutes. Are you ready?

All right. For the next 400 years, the people of Israel are going to be treated like a geopolitical football being thrown back and forth from empire to empire, because they're at the crossroads of multiple continents and they're sitting on a very valuable piece of real estate.

When we leave the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, Persia is ruling the world. And they're relatively tolerant of the Jewish people. They allow them to rebuild their walls and a temple. They allow them to practice their religion.

But then in 331 BC, Alexander the Great conquers the known world. And Alexander is a student of Aristotle. And his main goal was to unify civilization, its language and culture. He wanted to "Greek-ify" the world. It's a process called Hellenization. And the people of Israel must begin to coalesce to a Greek way of life, losing some of their Jewish identity.

And after the death of Alexander, the kingdom is split into divisions, and a man named Ptolemy takes over the area that the Holy Land is in. And Ptolemy is pretty good, right? Things are decent under his rule. The people are allowed to keep some of their customs. There's relative peace.

But then in 198 BC, a man named Antiochus takes over. And he is extremely passionate about this Hellenization process, this "Greek-ifying" process. And so, he begins to impose many of these things by force. And their identity and religious freedom begin to wane a bit.

And then in 175 BC, a man named Antiochus Epiphanes comes to power, and he really buys into this. So much so, that he develops a very radical anti-Jewish program in the area. He set about to destroy the Scriptures. He didn't allow the Sabbath or many of the other festivals to be observed. Food laws were abolished and circumcision couldn't be practiced. In fact, many of these things became capital crimes, devastating to the people of God who were wanting to be faithful, the remnant of God. And then his rule is climaxed in 167 BC when he actually has a pig sacrificed on the altar to Zeus. And the people can't take it anymore, and so a revolt begins to break out.

Some of you may know this is called the Maccabean Revolt. And the people of Israel, some of them, begin to fight a guerilla-style war and begin to win some of their freedoms over the course of many years. As a side note, this is actually the foundation of the Hanukkah celebration for our Jewish friends. And this is followed by, relatively speaking, some years of good times, more freedom.

Until in 63 BC Rome and Pompey come through and conquer the area. And then a system of local governors is put into place to serve as local kings to rule the people. And around 40 BC a man named Herod the Great comes to power. He's called Herod the Great because he had many great building projects. But he is a terrible and ruthless and vicious and cruel man.

And so, by the time we get to the opening of the New Testament (where we're going to start next week), this is the history the people of Israel have been living with for 400 years. They're groaning under foreign rule and oppression and limited religious freedom. They're being taxed in extreme ways without benevolence or integrity at all. Government officials are constantly abusing their power to aid themselves. Even groups of Jews are being forced to fight amongst each other for whatever scraps of power they can muster. And it's this atmosphere that's building, that's creating a messianic fervor. *Would someone please, please save us from this? It has been so long.*

God Is Working Behind the Scenes

And I don't know how many times over the course of 400 years that the remnant, the faithful of God, must have asked, *God, what are You doing? What are You doing? This can't be part of Your plan. You cannot allow Your faithful people struggle and languish for so long.*

Now with the benefit of hindsight we know that God is still acting. We know that Jesus is right around the corner. But they don't have that benefit. They're just waiting. They're losing hope. And they're wondering if God will and can do what He said He would do. And generation comes and generation goes.

God is still working in these times. He's preparing things. From hindsight we know a couple of really fun things. The Greeks bring a more universal language so that now, when the New Testament is written into Greek, more people will be able to read it, to interact with it, to understand it. Hellenization was serving God's purposes.

We also know that the Romans are going to build a massive system of roads that connect the whole world. And what if that road system that Rome puts into place actually serves God's purposes for the spread of the gospel when Jesus does arrive?

See, all these religious and cultural and political and civil elements were aiding God's plan. But the silence must have been deafening. And this apparent inactivity from God must have confused God's people, that this kind of silence and this length of silence would actually be a part of God's plan.

In **Galatians 4:4** it says this: **"But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son ..."** Some of your other translations might say, **"In the fullness of time ..."** There's something bigger going on here than just these little geopolitical battles and kingdoms. There's a fullness of time that is coming about so that something can happen. God is moving the chess pieces around the board so that in the fullness of time, when the New Testament does begin, the world and the people are ready.

And so, we're going to turn the corner to the New Testament next week. And after 400 years of waiting and silence, an angel is going to interrupt a man named Zechariah and set off a chain of events that will change the world. But to the faithful, it looks like waiting. To God, it's preparation.

From the faithful's point of view, it may look like we're in the middle of nowhere and we're not sure our Father can really get us to the "beach" like He's promised.

What Does Waiting Look Like for Us?

And so, what does this have to do with us, friends? If we can, I would like it if we could enter this moment and put ourselves in this space of 400 years. Because it is important for us to remember and important for us to know.

Because as disciples of Jesus, we will live lives marked by waiting. And wow, we hate waiting. It's just part of our current moment and culture. Everything is so instant and immediate. The waiting muscle for many of us is very, very atrophied. I don't have to wait for an answer—I have Google. I don't have to wait for the oven to warm up—I have a microwave. My entertainment is always on demand. Traffic brings out the worst in us because we're just in a hurry to get the next place that we're eventually going to wait. Some of you get frustrated when

your boss wants to deliberate over a decision for another day or another week, and it impacts us. It brings up these levels of frustration because we just want it to happen now.

But for disciples of Jesus, we will live lives of waiting. And there are a couple of ways that we wait.

Waiting for God's Ultimate Return

The first is that we wait in kind of an ultimate way. We have this thing we experience collectively—we're all waiting for the culmination of Jesus' work and kingdom. Our Lord has promised us that one day He will return and restore all that is bent and broken. It's already been promised and yet it's not yet realized. And so, there's this collective and ultimate waiting that we all kind of experience together. But there's also very personal waiting.

Waiting in Very Personal Ways

I know many of you have experienced these kinds of seasons of life, whether they've been long or short, where there seems to be silence from God. There seems to be no hope, no voice from God. You're not sure whether He's really going to do what He's promised to do. It doesn't seem as if He's active at all. He's not accomplishing what we think He should accomplish, and He's certainly not doing it on the timetable that we would propose. And all we want in our life is for God to act or to speak or to do something ... and nothing ... waiting.

A hard and necessary part of the believer's life is waiting. And sometimes we wait for really big and hard things. I know that for some of you, you have waited for wayward children to come home. You've spent years of your life praying for that son or daughter. You could fill up buckets with tears that you shed, hoping that this relationship would be restored.

Some of you have waited in hard medical situations. Many of you know the feeling of actually sitting in a waiting room for hours or days, waiting for news of a diagnosis or a successful surgery, or hoping that that loved one who's on a certain medical trajectory will somehow change course. You're waited for a prognosis or an outcome, or you've sat by a phone for weeks, waiting for a doctor to give you some test results. And there's nothing in your control.

Some of you have maybe been waiting for a lifelong battle or bent or addiction to just be over. You've pleaded with God to help you with it, that thorn that's in your side. You've maybe

even taken some active and drastic steps as a co-laborer of God to kind of rid your life of some of these things. But it's still there, and year after year you battle, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully. And you want nothing more than for God to supernaturally take this thing away and just be rid of it.

Some of you have or are waiting for a spouse to come along. You're trying really hard to not rush that process. But year after year passes and you're not sure whether God is ever going to really give you the desire of your heart in that area of your life. And it's hard and it hurts and it's long. It's lonely. And you wait and you wait and you wait.

I remember one particular season of my life almost fifteen years ago. I remember it vividly because of where I was. It was a summer night and I was having an emotional breakdown in the corner of a random Taco Bell at 9:30 on a weeknight. That tells you how bad it was. My entire life seems to be crumbling around me, I've been kind of beat up in some ways, cast aside in some others. And the only thing that makes sense is these three burritos on my plate are going to give me some fleeting moment of joy and pleasure, because everything else hurts. And I'm asking God to show up and I'm just not seeing it.

I know I was probably like a kid in the back seat thinking I knew how to get to Florida best and that it shouldn't be this hard and that it should be faster.

Two Questions about Waiting on God

God is always doing something in the waiting. And I think it begs two questions for us today that I'm hoping I can answer for you. And then I want to propose four things that you can do, four applications if you find yourself waiting on God.

1. What Is God's Purpose in Waiting?

The waiting we experience on this earth begs this first question. First, what's God's purpose in waiting? What's He doing? Why not always sooner if He has the power for it to be sooner?

I think the Bible has some clues for us. One of my favorite verses is **2 Peter 3:8-9**. It says this: **"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as**

some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance.”

Now Peter is referencing Jesus’s ultimate return. But that phrase there—“**As some understand slowness**”—is a great clue for us. He is not on our timetables. It may seem slow to you, but it is not necessarily slow to Him. It’s just right.

And so, what is God doing? We know this from our time through the Old Testament this year. He’s working His plan. He has long-term, big goals. He sees the big picture, and we can’t always see that. But we can confuse silence with inactivity from God. God is active. His plan is still moving forward. He’s going to reach the destination that He set out to arrive at. You can count on it. What’s He doing? He’s working His sovereign plan that He has the power to pull off.

2. What’s God Doing Inside of Us While We Wait?

But the more poignant and maybe pertinent question for us today is—What’s God doing inside of us while we wait? Now as I was reading on this topic in preparation, it was interesting to find that, conservatively speaking, you’re going to spend about an hour every day waiting for something to happen. It could be traffic lights, carpool lines, elevators, food at a restaurant, you name it. And if you add that up over a lifespan of seventy-something years, you’ll spend more than three years of your life waiting for something to happen. You’d think with that much practice we’d be getting better at this. But that doesn’t always seem to be the case. In fact, as we get older, sometimes our fuses get shorter and we’re quicker to get to that impatient and bitter moment.

That’s because the real issue isn’t waiting; it’s what’s happening inside of us while we wait. And maybe it’s just my mail I’m reading, but I am often... so often, I’m waiting on a downward spiral of impatience that leads to frustration that leads to selfishness when I have to wait.

And so, the question for us is, *If that’s what happens to me when I’m waiting on earthly things, what’s going to happen when God makes me or allows me to wait?* Friends, what’s going on inside of you during your waiting? What is God doing? The answer is that God has big goals for you. We know from the Scriptures that He wants to transform you into the image and

likeness of His Son. That is His main and overarching goal for your life. Transformation through the waiting.

And so, when we're in a waiting season, we should probably ask ourselves, *Is my heart now characterized by patient longing and expectation for what the Lord is going to do? Or is my heart characterized by frustration and bitterness, that I'm not where I thought I'd be by now? The problem isn't fixed by now or it's not happening as fast as I want?*

Friends, God will allow you many times in life to exhaust your finite resources in order to help you more fully rely on Him, His timing, and ultimately, His plan. Because it's in these waiting moments that we're often shaped and molded and prepared for what's next.

And so, if God is doing something in these waiting seasons, His plans and purposes are not stopping. Yes, He's on a different timetable, but He's working His plan. And if He's doing something, if He's hoping to do something in our hearts and lives, He wants to transform us, make us more like Christ—if that's what He's doing, then our challenge today and, frankly, every day, is to align ourselves with Him and His purposes.

Application: Four Things We Can Do While Waiting

And that's where I want to leave us today, to spend our last few moments with a few thoughts about what we can do while we're waiting, how we can respond. So, let me offer for you today four quick things that you can do as disciples of Jesus to align yourself with God's purposes in the waiting--both in the ultimate, collective waiting, but also in the very personal waiting seasons. Because it's these waiting seasons of life that will make you feel like you have no control and no choice. But you can do some things while you wait. You can do some things.

1. We Can Decide to Trust

The first thing you can do is that we can decide to trust. We can decide to trust. Friends, have you nailed this down in your mind? Do you trust the Father? Do you trust His love and His goodness to you today and His faithfulness for you tomorrow? Have you settled that issue in your heart and mind?

As I look at my own life, for me it's not a blind trust. It's a trust built on a long track record of God's faithfulness to me in both big and small ways in the course of my thirty-eight

plus years on this earth. And my job is to remember those things, to bring those things to mind, to write them down, maybe, to bring them to the forefront of my mind on hard days. Because the Lord has been good to me. And the Bible is full of commands, pleas for the people of God to remember. You have to remember what God has already done for you in the past if you're going to make it through your next season of silence. Because you will have moments in the waiting when you will doubt whether God is loving or good or active at all. And you better have something to recall to become a ballast in your boat during those tumultuous times. You better have an anchor for your soul that's described in Hebrews chapter 6.

Psalm 33:20-22 says it like this. I love this verse. **“We wait and hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.”**

Friends, where is your trust? Where is your hope today? Is it in the driver?

Psalm 27:13-14 are another one of my favorites. It says it this way. **“I am still confident of this; I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”**

David's writing this psalm and he's confident. And I've often wondered, What reason does he have to be confident? I think if we asked David, he would tell us that he's already seen the faithfulness of God in big and small ways in his life, and so he's very confident in God's character to do that in the future.

And so, the first thing that we can do if we're waiting is we can decide to trust. We can develop, continually develop, an attitude of trust in God.

2. We Can Work on Our Hearts

The second thing we can do if we're in a waiting season is we can work on our hearts. We can work on our hearts during the season of waiting. I can work on my inner character, this control center of my life.

One of the really neat things about a long car ride is that if you aren't the driver, there's a lot of opportunity for you to focus on other things, because you're not driving. I'm in the back seat of this car, right? And if I'm in the back seat and it's taking longer than I'd want, how can I make the most of this for God's purposes? Or I can sit there and stew and perhaps grow more embittered or impatient or even resentful to God for bringing me on this road trip.

I can assume that if I'm waiting, there is something that the Lord is preparing me for, and I want to get ready for that. I want to ask Him about it. And I think one of the best ways you can work on your heart during a season of waiting is through this connection to God through prayer. That's all prayer is—it's just connection to God, asking Him, "God, what are you preparing me for?" and then listening. If He's driving, I'm talking to Him. We're on a long road trip together and I want to get to know Him better.

Psalm 40:1 says, "**I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined and he heard my cry.**" We have a God who hears the cries of His people. He has inclined His ears. He's bent His ear in to listen to His children. He's attentive to us, He's ready to talk to us. He does not have His noise-cancelling headphones on to drown out the cries of His children in the back seat.

And so, have you considered that the best thing that you might be able to do during a season of waiting is to develop an attitude of prayer, of connection to God, so that you can work on your internal character and heart during a waiting season? Because our temptation in a waiting season is to constantly maneuver, to fix things that we don't have the power to fix, and begin to make moves. What if we just stopped and asked God, *How do You want me to grow in this season? How do You want me to respond here?*

So, the second thing we can do is we can work on our hearts during a season of waiting. That's through prayer, I think.

3. We Can Obey

And the third thing we can do, the third application, is that we can obey. We can obey in the waiting. Because waiting does not necessarily mean inactivity on our parts. We obey. We have a role to play.

Proverbs 21:31 says, "**The horse has been made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.**"

I'm going to obey. I'm going to do what God has asked me to do, the best I know how to. I will prepare the horse for battle and I will trust God for the result.

Friends, we've already been instructed on what to do as disciples of Jesus. We have our marching orders and there's a lot of freedom in that. We don't have to wonder what we're supposed to do while we wait on the Lord. He's given us these big, broad instructions to make disciples, to love God and love others, and to glorify God. But He's also given us instructions for

even the small areas of our lives, about how a disciple of Jesus should live. And so, while we wait, we obey.

Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David—all of their lives involved a long season of waiting, a long season of preparation for what was to come. And often times, it's the obedience in the season of waiting that makes them great examples to follow.

Even Jesus himself didn't begin His earthly ministry until approximately age thirty. He still, as the perfect Son of God, somehow needed to be prepared for what was to come.

Obedience and waiting are often linked together in the Bible. Here are just a couple of examples.

Psalms 37:34 says it like this: **“Wait for the Lord and keep His way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.”** Keep His way ... keep doing what the Lord has asked you to do.

Hosea 12:6 says it like this: **“But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.”** Maintain the disciplines of love and justice while you wait.

Galatians 6:9 is one of my favorites. It's a verse that I've put into memory for my life. It says: **“Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”** Don't grow weary, friends, in your obedience to God. Because at the proper time, in the fullness of time, it's coming. Keep doing what the Lord has instructed you to do.

So, in the waiting, obey. You can obey. Maybe it's one step in front of the other, maybe it's one little baby step at a time, but obey. Obey while you wait.

4. We Can Celebrate

And then finally, when God does eventually speak or act on your behalf, when He intervenes in your life in some way, whether that's miraculously or through something that appears relatively mundane, we can celebrate. We can celebrate that. When that moment comes, friends, in the fullness of time in your life, and that prayer is answered and we hear from the Lord or He intervenes, or the situation is resolved, you can celebrate that and praise God and share it with others. And then remember it for the next time, friends, so that you have the fuel to wait again, because another road trip's coming.

Summary

Friends, if you are waiting—if you find yourself in one of those waiting seasons, and you want to align yourself with what God is doing, His plan and His purposes, you can do some things. You can decide to trust. You can nail that down. It's not always easy, and I don't mean in any way to imply that it is, because doubt will creep in a lot of times. But is your life marked by an attitude of trust in God's goodness and His faithfulness and His love for you? You can decide to trust.

You can also decide to work on your heart. You can do that. Your internal character through prayer—you can use a season of waiting to become more like Jesus and to be prepared for what's next.

And you can obey. You can do what you've been instructed to do, even while you wait. You can make the horse ready and choose to obey.

And finally, when God shows up—and He is faithful to show up in our lives—when He acts and He speaks, we can celebrate that. When that season of waiting ends, you make sure to celebrate that and to remember it so that you'll have the fuel to wait again down the road.

Men and women of Grace, I'll conclude with this. The Father who loves you, the good, good Father in heaven, keeps saying to those who in the backseat, "Just wait. Just wait. It's going to be worth it. It's going to be worth it if you can just wait!"

Let me pray for us today.

God, we praise you as the one who holds all of history in His hands. And we confess, Father, that far too often we live like children who are impatient, doubting whether or not You really can come through on Your promises. We can't see the big picture, Father, and we're often flat out terrible at waiting. Help us, Father, to become the kind of men and women who become accustomed to waiting. And help us to learn the difference when we need to rest and give things to You and when we need to do our part of obedience and trust You for the rest. God, would You help us to recognize what we need to trust You, how we need to trust You more and become like Your Son, Jesus Christ.

God, I want to take a moment and pray specifically for those who are in a hard waiting season. God, I'm not sure of all the needs that are reflected in those who will hear my voice

today, but God, I pray that You would sustain them, that You would give them confidence to trust You. And God, would You please just give them a small glimpse of how You are working in their lives so that they can stay patient, trusting and obeying while they wait?

For those of us, God, who don't feel like we're in a season of waiting, would You use the good times, God, to draw us closer to You and build our confidence in our work and in our lives, so that we're better off the next time a long season of waiting comes our way?

We need Your help, Father. We love You and we ask for these things in the name of Your great Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well, people of Grace, I love you. I miss you. I'm waiting expectantly for the day that we're going to be back face to face. Live in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and have a great week.