

Eagle Wings

It has been calculated that if we add up the amount of time we spend waiting in a day, say waiting for the kettle to boil, waiting in a Supermarket queue, waiting on the phone, we spend over two hours a day simply waiting for some thing to happen. At the end of our lives, we will have spent six years and three months simply waiting. If you live in Gibraltar you would need to add at least another couple of years waiting in the frontier queue!

I suppose the question now should be – what do we do with that time? Because no-one likes waiting, waiting time is often seen as wasted time. Whenever I go on holiday I need at least a couple of days to 'wind down' into holiday mode. I have to spend the first day or so telling myself not to feel guilty about doing nothing.

We live in an 'instant results' society, where we are told that we do not need to wait for anything. Some of us might remember the ads at Barclay's Bank for Visa credit cards. Why wait we were told, holidays, new cars, new clothes could be ours now - buy now, pay later. And that of course is the wisdom of the age the wisdom of the world.

But God has a different kind of wisdom.

Way back in the book of Genesis, Abraham received a promise from God, a promise that his descendants would be like the stars of the sky, and even though his wife had never born children and was

around seventy-five years old at the time, yet and we are told that Abraham believed God. Abraham is presented to all believers as an example of faith, as *the* example of faith. But Abraham applied the wisdom of the world to the promises of God and got it wrong.

Because Abraham could not wait, so he indeed had a child, but not with his wife, he had a child with Hagar - Ishmael, the father of the Arab race,

The Bible is full of stories of people who could not wait, of people who tried to go out and do God's work in their own strength, and suffered the consequences.

Moses must have felt God had a special job for him, after all, here he was, born a Jew, brought up in Pharaoh's court God must have surely put him there for a purpose and he felt that he had to do something for his people the Jews, they were living in an intolerable situation of slavery and oppression, Moses did not wait for God – he applied the wisdom of this world to the promises of God and ended up committing murder and being forced to wait forty years in the desert for God to finally say, “now you're ready Moses, forty years later *now* you've learnt not to trust your own strength, but to rely on me, now is MY time”.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read of a whole list of people who learned to wait on God. After telling us about Abraham and Moses the writer to the Hebrews goes on:

"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawn in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (Heb 11:32-12:1 NIV)

To wait for God and to have faith in God is exactly the same thing in scripture. If you have faith, you wait, by waiting you build your

faith.

...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us

Perseverance - going on when everything is against us, when everyone tells us we are wrong, when the tide is moving in the opposite direction *let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run the race with perseverance.*

Amen?

I need to add a word of caution here, a caveat if you like. As preachers we have a responsibility to preach the whole counsel of God. I am *not* saying don't listen to others. Don't let's become like those Christians who say "I don't need to listen to anyone, I get *my* orders direct from God, I am running the race with perseverance because everyone is against me and I don't need to listen to any of them!" That's not perseverance, that is being stubborn, and stubbornness is a form of pride, I did it *my* way". Throughout the Bible we are told to listen to one another, submit even, to one another.

But bearing that in mind, let's go back to running the race with perseverance.

The problem with running races is that you get tired. Those of you who saw 'Songs of Praise' at the Costa the other Sunday will have

seen the interview with a couple who had brought a house and were converting it into a place of rest “for exhausted ministers” and Christian workers.

One of the growing problems among those working for God today is burnout. Serving God 100per cent is tiring. Whether we do that as full time Pastors and missionaries or as full time mothers it is tiring work. Christians who want to give themselves completely to God, in whatever capacity, too often find themselves tired, burnt out from running the race. This is not a criticism, it is merely an observation.

Yet we read in Isaiah that *“Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”*

As any mother of young children can confirm, kids never seem to get tired, they can run around the house all day long, they seem to have an inexhaustible source of energy! But even they get tired eventually. Isaiah says that those who trust in the LORD (KJV says those who wait on the LORD – trusting in God and waiting on God are the same thing) will find new strength, those who have learned to wait on God can run and not get tired.

Waiting time in our society is often seen as the equivalent of wasting time, but for God's children time is wasted when we try to

do things in our own strength. We will never know how much time was wasted by Moses when he tried to do God's work in his own strength, or by Abraham when he tried to apply the wisdom of the world to the work of God, how much time and energy is wasted, how much unnecessary suffering and anxiety can be caused when we run the race on our own.

"Do not be anxious about anything," says Paul, "but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

This is not our life, this is not our project, this is not our church, it is God's church, His project, our life is His life. The race we run has been *set before us*.

GOD HAS IT ALL PLANNED - he has has it all sussed out. Jesus said that his burden is easy and his yoke is light. But to plough with him we must wait for him, and the more we learn to do that the stronger we become.

But there's more Isaiah says that not only will those who wait on the LORD renew their strength, but that *they will soar high on wings like eagles*.

Brothers and sisters, God has not simply made us conquerors, he has made us *more* than conquerors, he has not only promised that we can walk without fainting, run without tiring, He has promised we can fly on wings like eagles.

But eagles don't get up there on their own. An eagle soaring high does not flap his wings, straining and trying to get higher, eagles spread out their wings and let the wind and the air currents carry them higher, and higher, and higher – far higher than even their own majestic wings could possibly take them.

And we will never get up there on our own.

We can flap about as much as we like, we can strain and struggle and burn ourselves out, and we will never even leave the ground. We need to learn to trust in God, to wait for him.

Here' another caveat. Waiting is not idleness. Some of the hardest working people I know are called waiters. “Is everything all right , sir? Can I get you anything, sir? What is your order, sir?” Waiting on God is serving God. We are here to do His will. “Is everything all right , Lord? Can I get you anything, Lord? What is your order, Lord?”

God's time is not our time, his ways are not our ways. Waiting does not come naturally to many of us, as much as we might hate it, it is a key part of God's purpose to teach us, to strengthen us, to lift us high. A another key part of God's ways of teaching us is listening, listening is a part of waiting, a part of trusting, many of us suffer disappointments because we don't listen. Robert, our invited guest, spoke last week about false expectations. The difference between false expectations and faith is, faith listens and waits for God, a

false expectation only listens to itself, what we want, not what God wants.

Are you waiting for anything this morning? Don't lose heart, God knows all about it. And what's more as you wait for the answer, know that you will be growing, as you rest in his presence, he will lift you high.