

Joke: A librarian is working away at her desk when she notices that a chicken has come into the library and is patiently waiting in front of the desk. When the chicken sees that it has the librarian's attention, it squawks, "Book, book, book, BOOK!"

The librarian complies, putting a couple of books down in front of the chicken. The chicken quickly grabs the books and disappears.

The next day, same thing, same chicken, puts the previous day's pile of books down on the desk and again squawks, "Book, book, book, BOOK!"

The librarian shakes her head, wondering what the chicken is doing with these books, but she finds some more books for the chicken and once again the chicken disappears.

Once again the next day, the librarian is again disturbed by the chicken, who squawks in what seemed to be a rather irritated fashion, "Book, book, book, BOOK!"

By now, the librarian's curiosity has gotten the better of her, and after she gets a pile of books for the chicken, she decides to follow the bird when it leaves the library.

She follows it through the parking lot, down the street for several blocks, and finally into a large park. The chicken disappears into a small grove of trees, and the librarian follows. On the other side of the trees is a small marsh. The chicken stopped along the edge of the marsh. Now really curious, the librarian, hurries over and sees that there is a frog next to the chicken, she sees the chicken holding each book with its beak in front of the frog. And now close enough to the action she hears the frog, "Reddit, reddit, reddit..."

Wait - Christmas 2024 Week 1

Today we are starting our Christmas series Journey to the Nativity. It will take us right up to our Christmas Eve service. And today I want to talk about something that many of us hate to do. Any ideas? Waiting.

Imagine for a moment that your phone goes dead. I sense the panic already. Many of us wouldn't know what to do. I mean think about it, the average person spends about 4 hours and 37 minutes a day on their phone. That's about 70 days per year spent looking at a phone. Now I know this might be hard for some of you to believe but my grandparents had a party line (explain what that is).

Here's something else to think about it wasn't until April of 1973 (ask who was born after 1973) that we even had these things called cell phone. And back then it was brick sized not one you just threw in your back pocket and carried around.

Before we get to far into the message today watch this. . .**Show Video**

Now back to my first statement, Imagine for a moment that your phone goes dead. Not just for a day or two but for 400 years. No texts, no calls, no updates. Nothing.

That's essentially what happened between the Old and New Testaments. God, who had regularly communicated with His people through prophets, went silent.

Now, you might be thinking, "That sounds terrible. Why would God do that?" Great question. And that's what I hope to unpack today.

Let me say this, it's essential to understand that God wasn't absent during this time. He was setting the stage for the greatest plot twist in history - the arrival of Jesus. You could think of it as the ultimate cliffhanger.

Malachi the last book of the Old Testament ends like this:

Malachi 4:5 (NIV): 5 "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.

Let me pause here to say this verse is not talking about a literal return of Elijah but rather a figure like that of Elijah.

And Jesus confirmed that when He said. . .

Luke 1:17 (NIV): And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

And who is it Jesus was talking about in this verse? John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus.

Then the last verse of Malachi tells us that he will He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents.

So, ultimately what these verse are referring to is that John’s mission was to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus by calling them to repentance and restoring the relationship between man and God.

Ultimately, this prophecy points to the transformative power of the Gospel, which brings about healing and unity, and it reflects God’s desire for a restored relationship and community with His people.

Today on our journey to the Nativity as we talk about wait. (WAIT not WEIGHT) I want to give you three points, and point number one is this. . .

1. The Preparation Of Silence

The silent times of life can cause us to wonder if God is really involved in our life in the moment. But what we need to remember are the words of Jesus who said:

John 5:17 (NIV): In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”

And God is still always speaking, all too often however we are not listening.

And just because I cannot hear or see God working, I can still know that he is.

There is a song we sing called Way Maker and in that song are these words.

Miracle worker, promise keeper
Light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are
Yes it is yeah, it's who You are
Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper
Light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are

Even when I don't see it, You're working
Even when I don't feel it, You're working
You never stop, You never stop working
You never stop, You never stop working

And the truth is church, sometimes, God's silence is actually His preparation.

During these 400 years, a lot was happening behind the scenes. The Greek language spread throughout the known world, creating a common language that would later help spread the Gospel. Roman roads were built, making travel easier for future missionaries. And the Jewish people, despite facing persecution, held onto their faith and the promise of a coming Messiah.

Maybe you've heard the phrase, " God Is Never Late; He's Seldom Early; He's Always Right On Time."

I think the Apostle Paul made that very clear to the Christians in Rome when he wrote:

Romans 5:6 (NIV): You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Did you catch that? " ..at just the right time "

The best we can do in our times of silence is to trust that at just the right time, God will act. We can trust that God may be preparing us or possibly preparing someone else or something else to make his next move more effective in our lives.

During that 400 years of silence, God's people would cling to the words of the Tora. . .or the Old Testament as we know it. Maybe, in the silence, they would remind themselves of what the prophet Isaiah taught them about the mystery of God's ways.

Isaiah 55:8–9 (NIV): For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

And the truth is we often experience seasons of waiting and silence in our lives. But instead of seeing these as times of abandonment, we can trust that God may be preparing us for something greater.

So, what might God be preparing in your life right now in your waiting?

Point number two is this. . .

2. The Faith Of Silence

I believe it was Saint Tom Petty who said, “The waiting is the hardest part ”

Okay, while he may not have been a saint, he was right. Waiting is tough, and waiting on God often challenges our faith.

This waiting period teaches us an important lesson about faith. What is the lesson? The lesson is this. . .

Faith isn't just believing when everything is clear, and God feels close. Genuine faith is trusting even when God seems silent. It's believing that He's working even when we can't see or hear Him.

The writer of Hebrews describes faith this way:

Hebrews 11:1–2 (NIV): Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

Truth is, the less we hear, and the less we see, the more we need faith. The heroes listed in Hebrews 11's “ Faith Hall of Fame” were commended because they had faith even though everything wasn't right in their lives.

The end of the chapter says:

Hebrews 11:39 (NIV): These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised,

What had been promised? A messiah, a Savior, Jesus. And these men and woman mentioned in Hebrews 11, people like Abraham, Jacob, Sarah, Issac, Moses had never seen Him, yet knew He would one day come.

Genuine faith thrives in the absence of evidence. The silent times are not only the testing times but the growing times of our faith. The silence can and often does stretch our faith.

When no prophets brought a fresh word to them, God's people would cling to the words they had, maybe they were leaning on David's words from Psalm 56.

Psalm 56:3–4 (NIV): When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise— in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

When we face silence in our spiritual journey, it may just be a time of test and growing of our faith.

So church let me ask you another question. Are we willing to trust God even when we don't see immediate answers?

Maybe there have been times when you felt God was silent. How did you choose to respond?

The third point is this. . . ,

3. The Impact Of Silence

The impact of waiting for something is keenly evident when we hit December 1st. Especially for young peeps. . .

Oh sure, the little treats you get out of your advent calendar may satisfy your sweet tooth, but each day, you realize you are one day closer to Christmas. The anticipation builds and builds until countless children lay in their beds on the night of December 24th, unable to sleep even though they have counted all the sheep on God's green earth!

Is it possible that God was using the 400 years of silence to build anticipation? The silence made the arrival of Jesus all the more powerful.

And after 400 years, God broke His silence through His Son, Jesus.

John 1:14 (NIV): The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This was the climax of God's redemptive plan—a moment that changed everything!

Anyone who has had a child born into their family understands this. You are waiting in the waiting room or waiting for someone to call and let you know everything is alright. The longer the wait, the more powerful the impact. In this case, the world had been waiting since we lost our membership to the Garden of Eden club.

Paul used an illustration to help us understand the challenge of waiting we experience today as believers:

Romans 8:22–23 (NIV): We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Paul seems to be saying that something is coming that will be so powerful that when it falls on us, it will envelop the whole earth and glorify it along with us.

This is a renewed, restored, redeemed reality. We will finally and fully be “conformed to the likeness of the Son.” We will be as perfectly holy as Christ and as dazzlingly beautiful as He is.

You see, this baby Jesus, the resounding end to the 400 years of silence, didn't just come to pay for our sins and repair our relationship with God. He set in motion a redemption plan that will eventually affect everything.

So, just as God's people waited for him to show up, we now wait for his glory to be made complete in all his creation.

How do we find comfort in waiting? Maybe, like those who long ago waited during the silence, we can hold on to the words we find in Lamentations.

Lamentations 3:25–26 (NIV): The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

The arrival of Jesus reminds us that God's ultimate communication is His love for us.

And God doesn't just show love, He is love.

In our lives, we can look forward to how God will break through our silence with His presence.

So, let me ask one more question. What is one way you can prepare your heart to recognize God's work in your life today?

Three Little Dots.

In the video, Eddie is right. Those three little dots can drive you crazy.

However, those three little dots let us know that an answer is coming. Right now, in your life, you may feel like you have waited and waited and waited. It may seem like it has been 400 years since you heard from the Lord. Take heart; an answer is coming. Cling to the words of David in Psalm 27.

Psalm 27:13–14 (NIV): 13 I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

As we reflect on the 400 years of silence, remember that God is always at work, even when we can't see it.

Embrace the waiting, trust in His preparation, and look forward to the incredible ways He will reveal Himself in your life.

Just as the silence sets the stage for the greatest message of hope, so too can our silent seasons lead us to profound encounters with God.

I know the waiting can be difficult. . .but God. But God is faithful. But God is compassionate. But God is merciful. But God is love. . .But God.

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV): but they who wait for 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.

Next week we will be looking at 90 miles as we Journey to the Nativity.