

“Waiting” (Psalm 33:20-22)

I hate waiting. When I anticipate something, look forward to something, or have a great expectation, it is hard to wait. I have learned over the years to not “wish my life away” by too keenly focusing on the upcoming event and that has mitigated the difficulty of the waiting, but still...

I hate waiting in lines. I’m sure it is a function of my “Americanism” and impatient nature but I kind of feel like one of the Declaration of Independence’s “unalienable rights” is the freedom from excessive “line waiting”. I doubt that you have ever noticed, but at church fellowships where a food line is formed, I almost always, with few exceptions, socialize until the line is gone. Now, this often means that the food has been pretty well picked over and, at times, choices are few. To me, that is okay, as long as I don’t have to wait in line. I will rarely wait more than a few minutes at a restaurant for a table. Sometimes, social necessity requires that I do, but if it is just me and Michal, I’d rather go to a second or third choice rather than wait in line. And please pray for me when time comes to have go to the Secretary of State for any reason. The waits there are catastrophically ridiculous (running at times to the better part of a full day!). One would think we live in a third world country.

Waiting in a doctor’s office is a struggle. Not only am I there on time, I’m always early. Yet, almost invariably, the scheduled time for the appointment comes and goes usually going well past the time set to see the doctor. Then, choosing the “right line” at Costco or Meijer is one of the biggest decisions that can be made, evidenced by the inevitable, “I chose the wrong line again!”

Well, few of us like to wait. But we are definitely doing some “waiting” in these days of the coronavirus pandemic, aren’t we? We are waiting for the crest of infections to be reached so we might have some idea when we might get our lives back to normal. Some are waiting to get back to work. We are waiting to be able to hold our grandchildren again and read them a book. We are waiting to be able to go to a restaurant again. We are waiting to see what the ultimate financial impact will be for us. We are all waiting to be able to all come to church again. Some, having contracted COVID-19, are waiting for recovery. Sadly, tragically, far too many will wait for recovery in vain.

And so, when I read Psalm 33:20 for the umpteenth time, it bore a bit more meaning than ever before when I saw, “Our soul waits for the Lord;”. It struck me that “waiting” is an issue of the soul or the inner, immaterial part of man we call the heart, spirit, and mind. Waiting is not usually hard physically unless you are starving and waiting for a meal or you are dying of thirst and are waiting for water. But most waiting is effortless as we sit in a chair or stand in a line. Usually, waiting “angst” is a matter of the soul, a matter of the spirit, the attitude. It has more to do with boredom, inconvenience, and anxiety than it does with any real physical hardship. So, when the Psalmist says, “Our soul waits for the Lord”, what is he saying? I think the next few verses give us some insight:

- Our soul waiting on the Lord means that we realize that he is our help and shield (v. 20b)

Listen, by all means wash your hands often and well. Use hand sanitizer. Be faithful at social distancing. For a week now (writing this on March 30th) other than being in my car, I have been at home or in my office. I’ve gone nowhere else. As much as I want to, I have not sneaked over to see my little grandkids, even though I might easily “get away with it” and am highly convinced it would be “safe”. At the end of this, I want to be able to say that I did everything

within reason to staunch this virus and not get it my self or give it to someone else. But as good as all that is, the reason I will not get the virus if indeed I do not get it, will be because God is my help and shield. Earlier in the Psalm in v. 16-17 we read, *“The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. 17 The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.”* Listen, have a *“great army”* of devices to keep you from getting the virus; employ *“great strength”* in disciplining yourself to socially distance. But know, at the end of the day, that God is your help and shield. And if you do get the virus, it is part of God’s *“good”* for you (Rom. 8:28).

- Our soul waiting on the Lord means that our joy and gladness is in him (v.21)

Listen, if you are waiting for this thing to be over before you can know joy and gladness again, you may be waiting a long time. The Psalmist says his gladness of heart was not due to any external circumstance. It was grounded in his *“trust in his holy name”*. Are we trusting God in this circumstance because he is holy and will always do right? If not, our gladness will ebb and flow and potentially disappear as this situation goes on. But if it is placed in *“his holy name”* it will be constant.

- Our soul waiting on the Lord means that our hope is in his love of us (v. 22)

Where is our hope these days? That the scientists will find a vaccine? That the politicians will stop being politicians long enough to take measures that will ultimately be helpful? That the stock market won’t go down any more than it has? That we won’t get the virus? All valid hopes! But none of them sufficient for genuine *“soul health”*. Verses 18, 19 of this Psalm says, *“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those **who hope in his steadfast love, 19 that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in **famine**”***- (or virus, if it is his will).

I hate waiting. I hate waiting for anticipated events. I hate waiting in long lines. I hate waiting in doctor’s offices. But I rejoice in my soul to wait for the Lord. We’ll need this truth more and more as the days go on and we *“wait for the Lord.”*

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