

“Don’t Just Stand There — Do Something!”—Acts 1:8-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Don’t Just Stand There — Do Something!”, is Acts 1:8-11. Jesus said to His disciples: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Wait! Wait! Wait! Seems like all I ever do is wait!” Such a statement of frustration is very common in most of our lives. We receive phone calls, texts and emails reminding us of appointments only to arrive on time and find ourselves waiting for our appointment to begin. When seeking support and answers to question on the phone we get put on hold only to hear advertisements and . . . that wonderful music which . . . is supposed to make our waiting more

pleasant? Remember the day when it took ten minutes to boot up your computer? Of course not, because we get impatient when it doesn't happen within thirty seconds now. Waiting definitely tries one's patience. Maybe that's why doctors call them "patients."

Hmmmm.

However, there are some people who are proactive when it comes to waiting. They come prepared to do something while waiting because they know that schedules are difficult to maintain when it comes to dealing with people and their struggles. While waiting I've seen people reading a book or the magazines provided in the waiting room; I've seen people knitting or doing some kind of needle point; I've seen people use this waiting as an opportunity for visiting with others who are also waiting; and, of course, the trusty smart phone comes to the rescue which brings games, movies and social media to our fingertips to entertain us while we wait. What do you do when you wait? Stand around doing nothing? Or utilize your time to be productive?

In our text we find Jesus' disciples standing around. Well, actually it was more like standing in awe of what they had just experienced in the ascension of Jesus into heaven as *a cloud took Him out of their sight*. Verse 11 tells us that *two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? Ah .*

. . why not? What would you do if you just witnessed your leader physically float out of your sight by way of a cloud?

Actually, the question may have seemed mute in light of Jesus' command to His disciples before His ascension. He told them in Luke 24:49 → *Stay in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high*, referring to His sending the Holy Spirit upon them. What were they supposed to do? Jesus told them to “stay put” and wait.

However, waiting was probably a very difficult task for them at this time, especially if they felt they had been waiting for Jesus to act for over the three years already. They even asked Him immediately before His ascension: *Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* (cf. Acts 1:6) They wondered why Jesus didn't act sooner to bring in His kingdom by taking over the Roman government, taking back the promised land and ruling the Jewish nation as their king.

Isn't this what makes waiting so difficult—you would like results to happen in your time and in your own ways. When your expectations are not fulfilled according to your timetable and your plans, frustration sets in. While the Holy Spirit strives to produce the fruit of patience, your sinful nature strives to breed sin in the midst of impatience. Self righteous judgments about the incompetence of others may fill you mind or even your mouth. You can easily treat others disrespectfully because things are not going your way. You can even be tempted to

build up resentments toward the LORD because He is not making what you want to happen quick enough. The devil can certainly gain a foothold while you are waiting.

It was for just this reason Jesus told His disciples the night before He died on the cross: *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* (cf. Matthew 26:41) Patience is not simply the act of waiting. Patience is how we behave, guided by the Holy Spirit while we are waiting, since patience is *the fruit of the Spirit* (cf. Galatians 5:22).

Jesus stated the purpose for their waiting in verse 8 of our text. They would *receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them to be Christ's witnesses . . . to the end of the earth.* Their waiting was to prepare them as His witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. They needed the Holy Spirit to clear up their misunderstanding of Christ's work and to understand properly their continued work as His disciples. He had even told them in John 13:7 → *What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.* After His suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and their receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples would understand that His kingdom was more than a nationalistic existence. Rather, it is a relationship existence with God forever by trusting in the Person & Work of Jesus.

The waiting referred to by these angels at Jesus' ascension was more universal than the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It actually throws all Christians into waiting. The angels said: *This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.* (Verse 11) Every Christian is waiting for Jesus to return from heaven to restore all creation and give new glorified bodies to all believers in Christ at the resurrection of all flesh. Question is, how do you wait?

According to Acts 1:14, these disciples waited for the fulfillment of Jesus' promises *with one accord . . . devoting themselves to prayer.* Following the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost these disciples still devoted themselves to prayer while engaging people with God's Law and the Gospel from the Scriptures. They spoke to the people about their sin and their need for forgiveness in Christ alone, what He did for their forgiveness and salvation through His life, death and resurrection. What happened? Some believed, others didn't and still others persecuted these disciples, even striving to take their lives. Yet they continued *with one accord . . . devoting themselves to prayer.*

Do you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven prayerfully, seeking His help **and** His guidance in the midst of your struggles with the presence of sin and the devil in this world? Let's

repent together by using the prayer of Psalm 130:1-6.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If

you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand?

But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared. I

wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I hope; my

soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen for the morning,

more than watchmen for the morning.

This prayerful waiting also has a purpose connected to it. **As you experience God's gracious deliverance in the forgiveness your of sins in Christ, His Spirit will move you into active service to others in His name.** It's not a prayerful waiting which simply looks for the LORD to deliver you from struggles to make you feel better or make things happen your way. Prayerful waiting which is directed only inward on yourself and your own desires does not recognize the full purpose of the Person & Work of Jesus Christ while we function as His Church in the world. Prayer is asking Yahweh to deal with your heart and life by His grace so you can be directed outward in actions and words which share that grace with others.

As you wait prayerfully in humility, confessing your sins before God and trusting in the atoning work of Christ for your forgiveness, the Holy Spirit will give you the desire and ability to be active

witnesses of Jesus Christ while you wait for His 2nd Coming. As you wait for Jesus to come back, seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance through prayer, it will lead you into a waiting which is combined with **action**. Because of the empowering Holy Spirit given to us, we don't just stand there looking into the sky . . . even in awe. We do something. Specifically we live our faith openly to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into other people's lives so they too can look forward to Christ's 2nd Coming with expectant joy in repentance and faith in Him. Amen.

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage;

wait for the Lord! (Psalm 27:14)

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