

## While Waiting, What Do We Do?

05/24/20  
Y. Joe Kim

*So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” <sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” <sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. (Acts 1:6-14)*

### 1. We are Waiting

Last Monday, Governor Baker announced the reopening of churches in our state. Many Christians have been waiting for this announcement. Our Bishop Devadhar has requested that we wait to open church until the end of May. Theoretically we can open our sanctuary on June 1 for our in-person worship and ministries. However, this Wednesday our church leadership will discuss to determine when will be the best time for us to open our church facilities.

These days we find ourselves waiting in grocery lines, at the post office, and in the hospitals. Many teachers and students are waiting to go back to school. Those who have lost their jobs are waiting to go back to work. Many people keep on waiting. In the Bible we find that many people were waiting as well.

### 2. Waiting for the Holy Spirit

Today’s scripture, Acts Chapter One, tells us about what happened when Jesus was about to ascend to heaven. The disciples ask Jesus, “**Lord,**

***is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus replies, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”***

During Jesus’ ministry, the disciples wondered when Jesus would be the king of the Jews. When Jesus was about to leave earth after his resurrection, the disciples asked Jesus when he was going to give Israel freedom from Rome. That was the most important concern that the disciples wanted to know. But Jesus told them that they did not need to know the timing of God’s plans.

Jesus says that God’s timetable should not be the concern of the disciples. Rather, Jesus told them that their business was to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit and to be witnesses to others.

In Luke’s gospel, Jesus promised the disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit. ***“I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”*** (24:49). When the Holy Spirit comes, the disciples would be empowered and bear witness to Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples that waiting would be their top priority.

### **3. God’s Timetable is Different**

Do any of us like waiting? Is waiting easy for you? I’m pretty sure many of us would say that waiting isn’t easy. For me personally, I waited anxiously for two years for the arrival of our grandson after the marriage of my older son. Now I am waiting for the graduation of my daughter and her and my younger son’s weddings.

What about the people in the Bible? Abraham and Sarah waited for 25 years until they had Isaac. The Israelites waited over 400 years to be delivered from Egypt. The Jews in the Exodus had to wait for 40 years to enter the promised land. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Israelites waited for the coming of the Messiah for 600 years. Christians have been waiting for the return of Jesus for 2,000 years. We continue to wait for Jesus’ return to this day. People are anxious to see their dream comes true as soon as possible, but God’s timetable is quite different from ours.

### **4. Waiting and Praying**

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. While waiting, the disciples prayed in the upper room, probably in the same room where Jesus had the last supper with his disciples. How did they pray? We do not know the exact answer.

How do we pray when we are in desperate need? We pray that God gives us what we want as soon as possible.

However, Paul says in his letter to Philippians, ***“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”*** (4:6-7).

It is so easy for us to worry and be anxious. But Paul tells us that we can let God know what we need in our prayers. When we pray in this way, our hearts and minds would be filled with the peace of God because when we put our trust in the Lord, we know that God’s plans are always much better than ours.

When the disciples prayed, God helped them to focus on the Lord and less on their desires. When they prayed, they were reminded of God’s promise and their worries disappeared. When the disciples prayed, they were able to distinguish God’s business from their business. While we are waiting for returning to the new normal, what do you think our business should be?

## **5. Serenity Prayer**

Reinhold Niebuhr, a well-known theologian, prayed about 100 years ago. “God, grant us grace to accept with serenity the things cannot be changed; courage to change the things which should be changed; and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that you will make all things right, if I surrender to your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.” This is called “Serenity Prayer.” Niebuhr prayed that he could know the difference between the things he could and could not change. Do we have wisdom that we can differentiate the two in our current situation?

## **6. Conclusion**

When the disciples prayed, they realized that there was one thing that they had to do: that was the election of a twelfth apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot. There were two candidates, Joseph and Matthias. After casting lots, Matthias was chosen. Luke tells us that Judas’s death and the election of Matthias were a fulfillment of prophecy in the Old Testament (Psalm 109:8). The disciples believed that everything had happened according to God’s plans.

## **7. Application**

Opening of churches and the businesses around us might be one of the most important concerns for us today. The question is, do we know when the right time is? If the timing is not right, we'd better wait. In Acts 1:7, Jesus uses two terms to refer to the timing, "times" and "periods." The Greek word for times is Kronos, which means, "time in the sense of duration," like May 24, 2020. But the Greek word for periods is Kairos, which means, "definite or right time." It is the time that God has chosen. Today's scripture tells us that we need to wait for God's right time. While waiting, we need to pray and discern what the Lord wants us to do.

About two weeks ago, an American missionary pilot died in a plane crash in Indonesia. Joyce Lin was 40-year old. She studied at MIT and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She was a pilot with Mission Aviation Fellowship. She was transporting Coronavirus rapid test kits and school supplies to a village in Papua, Indonesia. Lin knew what to do, while so many people are suffering from the virus. During the pandemic, many people in Indonesia found hope through Lin. Although it is so sad that she died at 40, she lived her life to fulfill God's purpose for her. She was a faithful witness to the love of Christ, laying down her life for Indonesian.

Some say that our current crisis is the best opportunity for Christians to share hope in Christ. Apostle Peter says, "***Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have***" (1 Peter 3:15). Do we have the hope that Peter was talking about? I am sure you have. I pray that our neighborhoods and the people around us find the hope and peace that we have received through Jesus, as we are waiting on the Lord and putting our trust in the best plans that God has for each of us and for this world. Amen.