

## Waiting on God's Timing

Mar. 13, 2022

Joe Kim

*"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." <sup>4</sup> But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." <sup>5</sup> He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup> Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup> But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" <sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. <sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."*

(Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18)

### 1. What Are We Waiting For?

All of us have hopes and dreams. What is something that we are waiting on this morning? Perhaps it is the end of the pandemic or the war in the Ukraine, or a return from soaring gas prices.

How long do you think we need to wait? A month, or longer? No one truly knows. Often times, the waiting can be just as tough as getting to the place we want to be.

### 2. God Promises to Abram

Abram had the same experience in Genesis 15. In Genesis, Abram was waiting for the birth of the son that God promised in Genesis 12.

Genesis 15:1 says, "**After these things the word of the Lord came to**

**Abram in a vision.**” What does the verse mean by “these things?” We need to find out what happened to Abram in Genesis chapters 13 & 14 to understand.

Abram, his wife Sarah, and his nephew Lot moved from Egypt to Bethel in Israel to live together. One day, there is a fight among the shepherds of Abram and Lot. As a result, Abram offers Lot to move somewhere else and grants Lot the right to pick the territory he desires. Lot chooses the area of the plain of the Jordan including the city of Sodom.

Abram’s family lives in the land of Canaan. Sometime later, there is a war in Sodom and his nephew Lot is taken captive. Abram pursues the enemy with his trained men and defeats them. Abram rescues Lot, his goods, and all the people.

After this, Abram hears the voice of the Lord in a vision, **“Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”** But Abram says, **“O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”**

Why is Abram afraid? There are two reasons. First, Abram is afraid because he is in the presence of God. Second, he fears revenge from the kings Abram just defeated to rescue Lot. The Lord assures Abram that God is his shield.

What does God mean when he says to Abram, **“your reward shall be very great”**? Since Abram has no child, he tells the Lord that his servant would become his heir. Abram reminds God that the Lord has promised to make him a great nation, but God had not given Abram a son yet. God reassures Abram that his servant would not be his heir. Instead, Abram would have a son.

In verse 5, the Lord brings Abram outside and says, **“Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”** The Lord shows Abram the stars and tells Abram that his descendants will be many. God does not tell Abram when he will have a son. Abram has no idea how long he will need to wait.

Verses 7 tells us that another reward is promised: **“I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess?”** But Abram says, **“O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”** (Verse 8) Abram believes God’s promise of a son, but he asks for a guarantee of the promise of the land. In verse 9 and the following, God provides a formal assurance about the promise of the land through an ancient Near Eastern covenant ritual.

The key verse of this passage is verse 6: “He (**Abram**) **believed the Lord**; “**and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.**” Today’s International version translates this as, “*Abram believed the Lord, he (the Lord) credited it to him (Abram) as righteousness.*”

Verse 6 is quoted four times in the New Testament (Rom. 4:3, 22; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). Abram believes that God will be faithful to him, giving him a son despite many years of childlessness. The author of Genesis stresses that Abram is counted as righteous because of his faith. Although Abram knows he is getting older and does not know how long he needs to wait for the birth of a son, he believes that God will keep his promise. Abram’s story tells us that God loves those who wait on God’s timing. Are we waiting on God’s timing?

### **3. General Conference Postponed**

You may have heard that the General Conference of the United Methodist Church was postponed until 2024. The General Conference was supposed to meet in May 2020 in Minneapolis. However, it was postponed because of the global pandemic. The global gathering was scheduled for August to September 2022. As the pandemic continues and wait time for visas have stretched to over two years in some countries, the Commission on the General Conference announced on March 3, 2022 that the 2022 General Conference cannot be held this year and postponed the meeting until 2024. I learned that the delegates to the General Conference are coming from forty different nations.

There have been many different reactions to the General Conference’s postponement. This meeting, the representatives of the denomination were planning to vote on deciding the future of the denomination. Some have been outraged by not being able to vote while others are relieved. While some are disappointed, others see the postponement as an opportunity to focus on resurrection through the process of renewing and rebuilding the new United Methodist Church.

For me personally, I wonder if the postponement is that God is telling us to wait on God’s timing. God may be giving us extra time to reevaluate and see whether we can become more open to working together on the mission of the United Methodist Church, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of ourselves and the world.

During the next two years, I hope that everyone in the United Methodist Church can come together in humility and wait on God’s perfect timing and God’s plan for our lives and the global church.

#### **4. The Silence of God**

When we wait on God's timing, what makes us so difficult? I believe the most difficult thing when we are waiting is the silence of God. In the story of Job, what makes Job miserable is neither the pain in his body nor his friends' accusations. Job wants to know why he suffers, but God is silent. Although he is very embarrassed when God raises many questions about God's care, Job is so happy that God is not far from him. He realizes that God was with him in his suffering.

What about Jesus? When he is crucified on the cross, Jesus prays, "***my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" (Matthew 27:46) This is Jesus' deep expression of the anguish he felt when he is crucified. At the moment God does neither say nor do anything for Jesus. However, God's silence does not mean God's absence. Jesus' resurrection is a proof that God is not far from Jesus when he is crucified on the cross.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Abram was 75 years old when he first received God's promise. Yet Isaac was born when Abram was 100 years old. Abram waited 25 years to have a son. Abram thought his servant Eliezer might become his heir. Sarah suggested that Abram have a son with her slave, Hagar. Yet despite the plans, God fulfilled his promise through a miracle 25 years later.

It was very difficult for Abram to believe God's promise. That's why God credited Abram's faith as righteous. In the New Testament, Paul says that just as Abram was counted as righteous because he believed the Lord, so are we counted as righteous by believing that Jesus died for our sins.

#### **6. Application**

We could be anxious about the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. But we need to ask ourselves whether we are willing to wait on God's timing. And we should not be disappointed when we don't see God's answer to our prayers. God might have a better plan for us.

The Jewish people have waited for a Messiah for over 2500 years. Christians have waited for the return of Jesus for 2000 years. How long do you think we will need to wait for the return of Jesus? No one knows the exact timing.

Yet, despite not knowing the exact timing, we know that the Lord loves us and gives us the best for each one of us. The Lord doesn't break his promises and he is faithful in fulfilling his promises.

May each of us find peace as we wait on God's perfect timing in all things. And may we trust in God's faithfulness and everlasting love. Amen.