

Waiting

Intro. What is your strategy for waiting, for example, at a medical appointment? Even though we arranged a specific time, we often have to wait because the staff is running behind due to an emergency or a procedure taking longer than expected. So we sit in a waiting room. Each of us has a different way to wait. We could look around and wonder what everybody else is there for or we can look through the magazines or our phones. Some people sleep, others knit. Some people get mad and leave! I bring a book or magazine when I might have to wait. Most of the time we don't miss our appointment no matter how long we wait (unlike the gospel). The parable illustrates another type of waiting with more serious consequences.

I. The first apostles and disciples expected the Lord to return soon. When that didn't happen, many became discouraged leading some to give up. This was a concern that Paul addressed in his letter to the Thessalonians some twenty years after the Lord's death. They were being persecuted and wondered what would happen to their family and friends who died before the Lord's return. Paul reassured them the dead will be raised to be with the Lord and them forever (4:17). The gospel is about being ready. It parable describes a wedding custom in the Lord's time. It wasn't like today's weddings. After the ceremony there is often a party that can go on quite late. The custom then was different. The bride and groom were not late coming home because they were partying. The groom would to the house of the bride's father and bring her to his home. The family

of the groom put on a big welcome at that time. This is the setting of the story of waiting. But that is where the wedding image changes as the Lord made his point. The details why they were late and of the oil and lack of it are not important. What *is* important: some of the group were *unprepared* for the groom and bride's arrival and the consequences were serious – they were locked out of the house, which in this parable is an image for heaven.

Concl. Some days, waiting for the Lord to return seems he is taking forever. But it depends on what we do as we wait, what our strategy is. Doing nothing while we wait only makes time pass v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y. It can be like at school or work if we keep looking at the clock, it never seems to move. There is a saying, “A watched pot never boils.” As followers of Christ, we are not supposed to just sit

around doing nothing. Since we do not know when the Lord comes, we are to keep occupied doing his work and not the devil's. Too much concern about the end being near can paralyze us into doing nothing. We have responsibilities for each other and our world that should keep us busy. There are plenty of things to do: give food to the hungry; drink to the thirsty; shelter to the homeless; visit the sick and imprisoned; give clothes to those who have none; comfort the grieving. Our church calls them the Corporal Works of Mercy. **If this world is a “waiting room” for heaven, we have a lot to do to help make time pass well, if not quickly.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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