**Why the Wait?**

**6-21-20**

*21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” 23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is best known as the German pastor who opposed Hitler and helped to form what was called the Confessing Church in Germany after much of the church was compromised by Nazi politics.

* He was also a theologian and author who wrote multiple volumes, a couple of which have become classics.
  + And one, *The Cost of Discipleship*, was one of the most influential Christian books of the 20th century.
* In 1940, after having successfully escaped Germany for America, Bonhoeffer caught the last ship back to Germany before the war, telling friends that he could have no part in rebuilding the German church after the war if he did not battle for her during it.
  + By 1943 he was arrested and jailed for two years where he wrote and also functioned as the prison chaplain to both prisoners and guards alike.
    - But in 1945, he, along with dozens of others, was implicated in an earlier plot against Hitler’s life.
    - And in a fit of rage, Hitler ordered him executed as a co-conspirator just two weeks before the concentration camp he was in was liberated.
  + At the time of his death, Bonhoeffer was just 39 years old.
    - His entire career spanning just 12 years.
    - That all by itself feels like such a waste.
* But what makes it even more tragic is that the church could have enjoyed another four years of Bonhoeffer’s gifts except for what seems today like a trivial rule.
  + You see, Bonhoeffer was something of a prodigy, having received His PhD in Theology at just 21.
    - But in the German Lutheran Church he could not be ordained for ministry until he was 25.
    - That meant that for 4 years he simply had to bide his time.
      * He wrote a second dissertation.
      * He traveled the world, visiting Spain, Mexico and even spending a year in the United States attending Union Theological Seminary.
        + A place he despised for having a mindless liberal theology.
    - He was finally, being ordained for ministry in Germany in 1931.
  + But in the end, God had other plans when the Nazis came to power just two years later.
    - Much of the church fell under the Nazis’ spell, with 80% of the churches falling in line with the regime.
      * This meant that Bonhoeffer would never pastor a church in Germany, even after all his degrees, preparations and long-awaited ordination.
      * Instead, he would become the conscience of Germany, calling out the injustices of the treatment of the Jews.
        + Both by the Nazis AND by the official church, which withdrew the membership of Christian Jews, many of whom were in pastors and leaders.
      * He would also use that brilliant intellect in the development of the Confessing Church and led an underground Seminary for Confessing Church pastors for three years.
  + But it begs the question, why did God wait for four crucial years before launching Bonhoeffer into ministry?
    - Knowing how much he had to share and how little time he would have to share it, why this seemingly unnecessary delay?
    - Well, Bonhoeffer himself would later write that it was during those four years – and especially during his year in America – that his academic theology became a practical faith.
      * It was not the seminary that helped with this transformation…
      * But rather, his interactions with the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, where he says he began to “see things from below…”
        + It was in this black church that he saw life from the perspective of those who suffered oppression.

But he also saw a vibrant and passionate faith unlike any he had experienced before.

* + - * + It was this perspective that gave him eyes to see and the courage to respond to the plight of the Jews in Germany.
        + It was in American that he learned that, as he put it, it was not enough, for the church to simply “bandage the victims under the wheel of injustice, but we need to jam a spoke in the wheel itself.”
    - All this, he said, was learned during those four years of just “biding his time”.
      * Four years that prepared Bonhoeffer for his brief life’s work to oppose the Nazis and defend the powerless.

I convey this story because it illustrates why God is so big on waiting, even when we think we are ready and raring to go.

* In the passage that we read a few moments ago, one of the things that struck me was the beginning of vs. 23:

*23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.*

* + Have you ever wondered why?
    - Why was it that with the death of Jesus looming in just three years, why didn’t God let him launch his ministry sooner?
    - After all, he already knew the Scriptures – we see that in the brief story in Luke concerning his wowing the religious leaders in Jerusalem when he was just 12.
    - What was the reason for the delay?
    - There are many theories.
  + One suggestion is that 30 years old was the age at which the Levites (that is the Priests of the Old Testament) entered into their ministry.
    - But Jesus was not a Levite, he was merely a Rabbi (or at least he would be once he began his ministry).
      * In truth, at that point he was a carpenter.
      * The rule wouldn’t apply to him.
  + Others point out that 30 was the age of Joseph when he entered into the Pharaoh’s service in Egypt and of David when he became King of Israel.
    - * So perhaps there is some symmetry there, seeing as Jesus is the “son of David” and the King of the Jews.
  + Then there was the prophet Ezekiel, who experienced his first vision in Babylon when he was 30 years old, thus beginning his prophetic career.
* All of these things could just be coincidence, but together, they do seem to indicate that it might have been difficult in Israel of that day to be taken seriously as a leader or Rabbi before your 30th birthday.
  + But God is bigger than cultural norms and impediments.
    - He who conceived and executed the incarnation of His Son to a human being certainly would not have allowed human conventions to delay his program.
    - Which means that, just as with Bonhoeffer’s four year “delay”, there must have been more to Jesus’ seemingly delayed ministry than just cultural expectations.
* And there was. In Luke 1:52, the Scriptures tell us that during the period:

*52 Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

* God was busy working to develop his Son during those hidden years when Jesus lived in relative obscurity in Nazareth.
  + But what was God doing with Jesus during those years?
    - Well, first off, he was identifying the Savior with those he was going to save.
      * Jesus spent 30 years living like every other working man of that day.
        + Along with them, he knew hunger, poverty, injustice, and oppression at the hands of the Romans.
        + Like them, he learned a trade, most likely from Joseph – his adoptive father.
        + He also would have gone with them to Hebrew School where he learned the Scriptures.
        + And the Bible tells us that like them, he dealt with every temptation known to man. Hebrew 4:15 says:

*15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.* (Hebrews 4:15)

* + - * So for 30 years, Jesus came to love and identify with sinful humanity.
    - A second thing that appears to have occupied Jesus during those hidden years was, as the oldest son, Jesus fulfilled his family responsibilities after Joseph left the scene.
      * After the story of Jesus being left at the Temple when he was 12, the Scriptures do not mention Joseph in any of the later stories of Jesus’ life.
        + Even though it does mention Mary (his mother) as well as his biological brothers and sisters.
      * So, it is likely that Joseph died sometime after Jesus was 12, but before he was 30.
        + And Jesus, as the oldest son, would be responsible to care for the family until the younger children were fully grown.
        + So Jesus may well have delayed his public ministry in order to carry out the responsibilities of his family ministry.
        + In this he glorified his Father.

But there was one more thing that we know was going during those hidden years – Jesus was waiting for the promise.

* The prophet Isaiah wrote in 11:1-2

*1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;*

*from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

*2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—*

*the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,*

*the Spirit of counsel and of might,*

*the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—*

* + This is a description of the coming Messiah – the one anointed with “The Spirit of the Lord.”
* Isaiah also writes of this in Is. 42:1

*1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold,*

*my chosen, in whom my soul delights;*

*I have put my Spirit upon him;*

*he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

* And twice before in the last couple of weeks we read of Jesus claiming for himself the words of Isaiah 61:

*1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,*

*because the LORD has anointed me*

*to bring good news to the poor;*

*he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,*

*to proclaim liberty to the captives,*

*and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

It seems that just as Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:4-5 to wait in Jerusalem for the anointing of the Holy Spirit in their lives:

*4 “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

* In the same way, it seems, Jesus also had to wait – in his case, to stay in Galilee – until he also was anointed with the Holy Spirit.
  + Something we see happen at his baptism (Mk 1:9-11).

*9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”*

* + John the Baptist, himself, interpreted what he saw that day. His eye-witness testimony is recorded in John 1:32-34

*32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”*

* Do we understand the significance of what John is saying here?
  + After 30 years on this earth, this is the moment – following his baptism by John – that Jesus of Nazareth becomes the Christ – the anointed One.
  + For 30 years he had waited…
    - And now, standing in the Jordan River, God pours out His Spirit upon him with a visible manifestation that looks, not like tongues of fire as in Acts, but like a dove gently descending and alighting upon him.
      * And so Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit.
    - But here’s the really significant part – the Spirit not only descends, but it stays!
      * And it is this staying cannot be over-emphasized.
    - It is at this moment that Jesus moves from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.
      * In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would descend on a person at a particular time in a particular place for a particular purpose.
        + Whether that person be a Judge, as with Samson, a prophet, as with Ezekiel, or a King, as with Saul.

The Spirit descended upon them, but did not stay.

* + - * But remember the prophecy we read from Isaiah 11:2. What did it say of the relationship of the Messiah (the Hebrew word for “anointed one”) and the Spirit?

1. *The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—*
   * + - * That is, it will come and stay – it will dwell or abide in him.
         * This is the very thing John the Baptist was looking for and he finally saw it when the Spirit descended like a dove upon Jesus.

John said that it STAYED on him.

Here we have the anointing that the words Messiah and Christ are talking about.

* And it is only after this anointing takes place that Jesus dares to begin his earthly ministry – even if it took 30 years.
  + It is upon this outpouring of the Spirit that the mission crystalizes (as he makes clear in the synagogue in Nazareth just over a month later).
  + It is upon this anointing that his daily activities are directed, as we see immediately in Luke 4 where it says:

*1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.*

* + - Mark even uses an even stronger word, saying in 1:12:

*12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.*

* + And it was upon this baptism in the Spirit that Jesus was empowered for ministry, by which he worked miracles, drove out demons, healed the sick, and knew the thoughts of others.
* Jesus prepared and waited 30 years for this in order to ensure that the last 10% of his lifetime – 3 years – would change the world for eternity.

So if Jesus thought it so important to wait for the anointing of the Holy Spirit that he waited for 30 years.

* And if he thought it so important to wait for the Holy Spirit that he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the “Baptism of the Spirit” coming 10 days later.
* Then why would we think it unimportant to wait for the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our lives before we embark on our life mission or commit ourselves to a course of action?
  + Why do we begin with brainstorming and strategizing and innovating and planning and then ask God to bless it at the very end?
    - Why do we emulate the world in all of our plotting and mapping things out?
    - Have we forgotten what our God said about all of the world’s great plans in Psalm 2?

*1 Why do the nations rage*

*and the peoples plot in vain?*

*2 The kings of the earth set themselves,*

*and the rulers take counsel together,*

*against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,*

*3 “Let us burst their bonds apart*

*and cast away their cords from us.”*

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;*

*the Lord holds them in derision.*

* + This is not God’s way. Rather, he says in Zechariah 4:6

*6 This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*

* Do we believe this to be true?
  + Honestly, I’m not sure that we do – I’m not even sure that I always do.
    - Or at least in my impatience and pride, I forget that its true.
    - I forget that (Ps 127:1-2):

*1 Unless the Lord builds the house,*

*those who build it labor in vain.*

*Unless the Lord watches over the city,*

*the watchman stays awake in vain.*

*2 It is in vain that you rise up early*

*and go late to rest,*

*eating the bread of anxious toil;*

*for he gives to his beloved sleep.*

* It’s not that we don’t have a part to play – we do.
  + But that part begins with waiting on the Holy Spirit and committing not to act until we are anointed, baptized, filled.
    - All Biblical words used to describe a pouring out, an immersion, and over-flowing of the Spirit in our lives.
    - But don’t get hung up on the words used to describe it or the forms this anointing takes – rather focus on waiting and anticipating His fulness and His leading.
  + What do we do as we wait?
    - What did we see Jesus doing – in fact right up until his anointing took place? Back to Luke 3:

*21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized* ***and was praying****, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove;*

* + - * Jesus was praying continually, regularly, and at length – we see this especially in Luke’s gospel.
        + He was constantly seeking out his Father, sharing his heart, discerning his voice, calling upon his Spirit.
      * Jesus was also, as we saw earlier, continually identifying with those he had come to save.
        + The sinner, the blind, the oppressed, the poor.
        + He became one with them, he took on their pain, he had grace for their weaknesses, he showed mercy and gave hope.
        + This is the heart of God, so it should be our heart as well.

Especially in these days of unrest and trauma, let us identify with those who are often left on the outside looking in.

Don’t believe the lie that says that we have to totally agree with someone in order to love them – and to act with love toward them.

* + - * And Jesus fulfilled his responsibilities to his family, even if it meant delaying his “greater work” for 30 years.
        + When they were able, he “took them along for the ride”.

His mother, Mary, was at the foot of the cross.

His brother, James, became a leader in the early church.

* + - There are no better examples of what to do while we are waiting than that of Jesus.

But then, when the waiting is over and the Spirit comes like a flood, move, act, do!

* There is a reason the books of Acts is called the book of Acts.
  + The church is Acting out of the fulness of the Spirit that is overflowing in them.
  + And next week we will see how Jesus suddenly launches out after 30 years in silence and establishes a beachhead of the Kingdom in just three short years.

**Benediction**

*Not by might nor by power,*

*But by my Spirit declares the Lord of hosts.*