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Market Street Fellowship

Waiting as a Servant

Zephaniah 3:8-13

"Therefore wait for Me," says the Lord, "Until the day I rise up for plunder;[a]

Another transcript reads (replacing "Until the day I rise up for plunder): "for the day of My revelation for judgment" and another "the day of my witness"

My determination is to gather the nations, to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. 9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my worshipers,, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. 11 In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. 12 I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. 13 The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid."

What does it mean to wait upon the Lord?

What does it mean to be a servant?

I remember a song I used to sing and play... and some of the words were, "Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord." Well, I feel like that song didn't really do it for me at the time... like many other songs. We sang it for maybe 4-5 minutes, waiting for maybe 30 seconds during an instrumental part, or a soft, pretty bridge, but then we finish the song and that's that. The waiting is over. How was I waiting on the Lord? What was I waiting for? I think I was waiting for a good feeling, an energetic moment, a "goose-bump" moment in the song, when the crescendo just made it all come together and the waiting was worth it.

Well, that was most of my experience in what you might call "worship". At least that was my experience in what you might call man's worship...

But waiting on the Lord has become something very, very different to me. It has become something that is really the difference between living in Adam or living in Christ. Waiting on the Lord is necessary to continue in Him. It is necessary to continue in Salvation, to continue to be found in the Man who is our Salvation, the Man who makes Salvation a living, continuing experience to us.

I've noticed in some of the scriptures that I've been reading lately, that Salvation is really spoken of as something that must be pursued, continually. I know I'm saying this to people who see that, but in me, I'm just discovering that I must continue to hear and see that all the time. This

message of knowing the Lord in this real and present way, internally, in the heart, is a message that can't get old....

Well, it CAN get old if you want to stop pursuing the Lord, but this message is the same message that is continually told by the prophets, by the apostles, and by the Spirit of God who teaches this message in an inward way to our heart. The words point us to continually seeking the reality, and the reality is what matters, the reality is the purpose, the reality is where we are eating and drinking and experiencing Life.

I was listening to 2 Corinthians sometime this week, and I really felt like this applied to me at the time (especially at the time, but still today)... Paul is talking about sorrow and compares worldly sorrow with Godly sorrow.

Paul says in 2 Cor 7:10, "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

He says that "godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation". That's one of those verses that makes it so clear that salvation is not static, it's not something that we just get our hands on, put it in a safety deposit box, and sit and wait to get it out when we need to show God that we have it. Salvation requires seeking, it requires pursuing, it requires a race, a battle, it requires searching. These are all active things.

So back to my original question, if the pursuit of salvation is active, then how does the word "waiting" fit?

The passage that stands out to me is the one from James 1, the one about waiting in front of the mirror. We've talked about this passage a lot, but as I read it this time around, it just really seems so much clearer in light of what we have been sharing and seeing. Particularly some of the things in James that seemed so "law" like, but now are becoming very clearly the things that seem to be the traps, the hooks in our flesh that keep us from abiding in the light.

James 1:21-25

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

"he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it..." This is a continual thing, a waiting in the mirror to continue to see and know. Not looking and rushing out into forgetfulness.

That's where I find myself. I find myself quick to run away from the mirror, and as soon as I do, I start trying to think of excuses as to why I am so impatient, why I am so attached to the world. I don't accept that it's my choice to step away, I point the finger at something. But this waiting is a choice, a willingness to continue on.

And I'm discovering that I don't like that. I don't like the idea that I can't just receive a Salvation that allows me to continue on in what I deem are legitimate things and pursuits in the earth. If I'm honest about it, I am a man that at many times is living two lives; the one is pursuing the world and the things of it, and the other is standing in the mirror for a short time, then turning back to what I have justified to myself as the innocent things, the required things that need my hearts attention to make it here.

I am very good at pretending something doesn't have an impact on me. I can say something like, "this thing is ok, it is necessary for my daily "natural bread"". But I'm starting to realize that in so many ways, that is a deception. I am starting to realize that I am making excuses to walk away from the mirror. I'm walking away for what I would call good natural reasons.

And it's not that interaction with the world is bad, it's that I let my interaction with the world become my life... and the problem is that I am so easily fooled that I actually believe that the world ISN'T pulling me in. I simply say to myself, this is ok, this is good, this is necessary, I just have to do this and then I'll put it to bed...

Well, the reality is I should be (all the time) just waiting in front of the mirror, living there.

Waiting in front of the mirror isn't something that I have to do outside of the world. I mean, I don't have to literally take a break and a timeout from the world to look in the mirror, although it might not be a bad idea to set up those conditions... but this description of standing in front of a mirror is really just the same as walking in the light, because James is saying that what we are doing is beholding a man. Beholding a man that we are knowing, that we are becoming familiar with, that we are seeing is our SELF. And of course I mean, not the Adam self, but the nature of Christ that has been planted there. We need to look at that nature, to live in and know that nature. We have to pay attention to it, to give it all of our attention.

So you might ask the question, "is Ryan beating myself up too much? Is it really that big of a deal?".

Well, yes, I am beating myself up some, and it is a that big of a deal. Beating myself up might not be the best terminology, but sorrow certainly seems to fit, and so that passage from 2 Corinthians has really become helpful... and it's really where I feel like I've been... it this state of godly sorrow.

Now trust me, I don't want to associate myself with the Corinthians at all... But it's just true, it's just where I am inwardly. I've needed that letter from Paul to my heart. Paul was a man who realized and saw that looking for anything in the earth to be life is just foolish, and he's writing to people that were looking for something in the earth, and he knew what those things produced. So he writes to them and invokes these feelings of sorrow on their part. And that proves to be a good thing.

Again:

2 Cor 7:10, "godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

So then this sorrow, this state in my heart led me to think about waiting, and servanthood. It has led me to realize that I can't do anything of my own, and when I try, I fail, and I'm right back to that funky darkness and haziness. So then I ask the question, well what can I do? The answer is nothing, except wait on the master, wait on the head of the body, wait on the Captain.

We were talking about some things on Friday night that made me think of the parable in Luke 12 about the servant where Jesus says:

"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required"

And interestingly, that particular line comes out of a parable that specifically deals with the nature of a servant.

I'm going to go off on a different direction for a minute, then get back to the servant thing...

So I feel like I've kind of been on phase one of this journey. But before I explain that, don't think that I feel like I've gone anywhere either! There are a couple of examples I can use to describe where I feel like I am, or where I've been lately... and also where I feel like the Lord is going, and waiting for me to follow... because if I don't follow, I won't go any further.

The first example is the Israelites in the wilderness. The Lord was so patient with them, and they knew that the wilderness wasn't the place where the purpose of the Lord was found. They knew there was an inheritance beyond the Jordan, but they refused to enter into that place. They complained and groaned about their situation, but were unwilling to go into the land by faith... they were afraid. I think they were simply afraid to lose their lives. The irony there is that if they were willing to lose their life, they would find it, but only a few saw that. So in the wilderness they were given a pattern, a description, a testimony, but in the land, at least the picture of entering into that land, there was to be a living in, an abiding in this place where everything they wanted was there, it was already made, already mature, ready to take. But they saw the end of themselves there, they were afraid of the strength of the enemy in the land, and they loved their lives too much to trust the Lord would deliver their enemy to them.

Well, that's what happens in us. We have a description of Life in Christ, we have an understanding of the Life of Christ, and maybe we start out with a real view and a real understanding, but over time, we begin to refuse it, because we don't want to lose any more of our life.

The other picture of where I feel like I am, and I talk about this a lot... the description of Paul's admonition for the church to eat meat, and stop taking milk. In other words, grow up.

So this is where that passage from Luke 12 kind of came into my heart and has been sitting there... "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required". The Lord has given us much, and much is required. Or "don't be a child and squander this gift... know the

value of it... there is an expectation because this has been given". There is a deposit in us, something that we must continue to pay attention to. This isn't a deposit that we just bury, or squander, or ignore. We've talked about those description that Jesus uses of the servant who doesn't give the master an increase. But if we are really knowing Christ, in a true, inward way, and we are willing to continue on in Him, we realize that we can be that servant, we realize that we are hiding this money that has been deposited and not moving forward, not producing an increase. This isn't our work with our natural hands that I'm talking about, this isn't a natural increase of numbers of people we invite here, or the amount of money we give, or anything like that. This is the increase of Christ in our heart. This is the Lord expanding His light in our heart. This is our willingness to be His servant and lay down low in our heart and let Him conquer absolutely everything in us, until He is the fulness. He is Joshua, and He is leading the battle for the land in our heart.

Jason H has been using the phrase "follow the Captain". The reality of following the Captain is really the same as being a servant. A soldier is prepared and waits on the order. He isn't asleep, he hasn't immersed himself in some other activity... he is waiting for the order of the Captain.

So you may not know this, but I happen to be a Captain too :) and my troops wait on my orders (in an ideal situation), but the reason is that they trust me. There is a willingness to not question my direction, but that willingness comes through trust in the fact that I will give good orders. Orders that are lawful and based on experience and understanding of how to accomplish our mission.

Now that's mans system. That's 100% natural, but I think the description fits at least in the sense that we don't do anything without the Captain's lead. In fact, we can't do anything without the Captain. In a natural way, if men act without the order of the officer, there can be terrible consequences.... So my men are to wait on my order. They are actively waiting to hear me or see me based and follow based on our communication and understanding of what is next.

I like how the centurion says it in Luke 7: "... say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

That is servanthood. That is following the Lord. And if you think about a military movement, or series of movements, they are maybe separated in parts, divided by land or sea, but the battle and the war have one goal, one purpose, and all of the members move toward that goal, continue on in the fight, with one leader, one Captain as the head, as the mind of that movement. A bunch of servants following the master.

So back to the Luke 12 thing... the parable of the servant. .

Luke 7:35 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched

and[d] not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

41 Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Verse 37 again, and if you didn't notice he says that the master will have the servant sit down to eat and he will come and serve them.

"he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them."

And in 38, "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

And the second part of that passage points out that the servant stops waiting for him. He is not concerned about the master and we see what happens... he is cut in two and appoints him his portion with the unbelievers.

We have been given much, as Jesus says in the parable, and for me, I know its so much more than I realize... and it is SO FOOLISH!!!! (I can't say that strongly enough)... It is so incredibly foolish to take this lightly. Do you see what happens to a follower of the Lord, a servant of the Lord that stops awaiting his coming? He is cast in with the unbeliever. We have to grow up in this, we have to move on. We can't wait in the wilderness knowing that there is a land to increase in, a land where the Lord not only requires that we enter into, but one where we continue on with Him as the Captain, where He conquers everything in that land and makes it perfect and full of His own Kingdom. We have to wait on Him like a servant, we have to wait in front of the mirror, for His work to be done.

And just to kind of wrap this up... we wait for this because of what it leads to. I know we can say many things, that it leads to rest, peace, life, and all of these things that are the nature of Christ. But what it IS and what it leads to is LOVE. The pureness of God's nature and a love toward one another and Him that is not even remotely known by Adam, by the nature at work in us that, like the servant who didn't prepare for his masters coming, it is a nature that beats the other servants and is drunk. We know that nature, that man, that has darkness in his heart. That servant of God can be our nature, one that forgets to look, one that chooses to look for Him... refusing the Light and the Life, for something in the darkness.

Isaiah 40:29

29 He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,

31 But those who wait on the Lord

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.