



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 6, 2007

Midweek Advent Worship

Psalm 130:5-8

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Hebrews 11:4-16, 39-40

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 38

### Patience

This morning I got to sit in a dentist's office and wait in the waiting room for an hour and 15 or 20 minutes, something like that. Don't you wish you were me? But it wasn't that bad. You see, I wasn't waiting to go in and have a guy poke some metal stuff into my teeth. I was waiting for him as he did it to two of my sons. The only time I had to get up was when he called me in and said, "Is it okay if I go ahead and pull these two teeth out?" I said, "Sure, I'm good. I have a magazine. Knock yourself out. I'll be out in the waiting room."

That kind of waiting is just sitting there, reading a magazine, catching up on the magazines you haven't read, and it's not that bad at all because it's not stress for you, right? It's just a matter of being patient.

However, if I was the one waiting there for an hour and 20 minutes and then I had to go in and have him dig around, I probably wouldn't have been as relaxed. I probably would have had a little more elevated blood pressure. I probably would have been a little more stressed out. It's kind of interesting the different emotions that come with different kinds of waiting, isn't it?

When you had some physical problems, you went to the doctor and you were waiting for the test results—that's a whole different kind of emotional state than when you are waiting to open up your presents, right? One is expectant joy and the other is fearful dread, but they are both waiting.

We aren't real good at waiting in our society. When it comes right down to it, we don't like to wait for much of anything. When we have to wait, we get upset. It's kind of interesting, the other day I was in the grocery store, and I kind of looked around at other people's carts as I was standing in line. Most of the carts seemed to be loaded down with food you didn't really have to cook. You didn't really have to wait for it to be cooked. Bags of salads with the carrots already shredded, the vegetables already cut up—you just take it out and pour it in the bowl and exert yourself enough to pour the dressing on and you are ready to eat, right? Meals that you can just throw in the oven or throw in the microwave and heat them up and they are ready to go. We just don't want to wait for a meal to be cooked quite often because we are rushing here and rushing there and doing all these various things. And we make our choices and evidently, from looking around that grocery store, that is what the majority of us say. We aren't waiting to eat anymore. We are just going to eat quickly and be on our way.

Unfortunately, I think that spills over from our society at times into our spiritual life. We bring our cares and our concerns to God and we wait for his answer and sometimes, because we don't get it in our timetable, we think God doesn't hear or God isn't listening or God doesn't care or whatever other silly answer the devil might throw into our head. That is why our God comes to us through the words of the psalmist and tries to teach us a little bit something about waiting for the Lord. It's a necessary part of the Christian life—to wait for the Lord, to put our hope in the Lord, to put our trust in the Lord, to learn through patient endurance just how dependent we are upon our God. And if that is something that Advent does teach us, that makes Advent a great necessity in my life and in yours.

To teach us about waiting, the psalmist uses an image that I don't think you or I have probably ever done. I know that I have never been a watchman on a wall watching to see if the enemy is about to come and attack the city or do something to my city. But it's something that I think with my imagination I can understand that kind of waiting. If you are in one of those fortified cities at the time that the psalmist wrote this, you've got some kind of defenses there, some kind of post where you are watching through the night. Can you imagine the stress level? If your city is being threatened and you know there is an enemy out there some place, can you imagine how every sound would get the adrenaline pumping a little bit? That animal that is crashing through those bushes—you start to wonder, is that the enemy? You turn your head a little bit trying to use your nighttime peripheral vision to see if you can really pick something out there. You cock your head and you listen closer. Finally there is nothing more and you decide it's just an animal. You relax a little bit and all of a sudden there is another noise and another sound and another movement. If that goes on through the night, can you imagine by the middle of the night, as you are all stressed out and knowing that all the people that are in their beds sleeping, their very lives could depend on you seeing whether or not the enemy is coming. Can you imagine how you would be longing for the sun to rise so that you could see something so you didn't have to guess, so that your blood pressure could maybe go down a little bit and your heart could stop racing so much? I think I can relate to that. I've never done it, but I can understand how a watchman would wait for the morning.

The psalmist uses that illustration for us, and then notice what he says—he says, “I wait for the Lord.” In the beginning part of the psalm he had talked about his sins and confessing his sins, but he had also confessed his trust that God had taken away his sins. So he wasn't waiting for the Lord to tell him whether or not he was forgiven. He had already expressed his confidence in the forgiveness of his Savior God. He says, “I wait for the Lord. In him I put my trust.” He is talking about waiting for the full deliverance of God, the full redemption of God. With him there is full redemption. That day, not only when the Messiah would come, but also when the world would end. He is looking through the Messiah's coming in both these things—the day when God would finally deliver him and everyone else, not only from all their sins, but from this sinful world.

So now, as he talks about waiting for that, he uses that image of a watchman on the wall and says to us, “I wait for the Lord more than that guy on that wall who is all stressed out. That's how I am waiting for the Lord.” Then, just in case we weren't

paying attention or didn't get it, he repeats it. "I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. You weren't listening? More than watchmen wait for the morning. Now do you get it?" The psalmist is really trying to tell us something. The Holy Spirit is trying to tell us something.

I don't know about you, but I think what he is telling me is that I don't always wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. I love my Lord. I want to serve my Lord. As I go through my daily life, at times I just get so busy running here and there, running this to that, getting this ready or getting that ready this time of the year, and then on the weekends you have everything else under the sun tugging at you, it seems, in different directions that some nights, when I lay my head on my pillow, I have to say, "Lord, forgive me. I love you. I long to be with you, but today I just didn't make enough time to be with you. Evidently I was waiting more for these other things in my daily life today than I was waiting for you Lord."

How about you? Do you see that at times we are impatient with God's answers to our prayers? We are impatient with how things are going? Or maybe we are even just too flat out busy to realize that the most important thing I can do is wait for the Lord and in his Word I put my hope. And all too often I don't put my hope in that Word because I'm not in that Word. Perhaps it's the same for you.

More than watchmen wait for the morning—sometimes I long more for a short checkout line than I long for the Lord. How warped is that?

So the psalmist teaches us how we should wait for the Lord with that kind of longing in our hearts. As we consider it, maybe we say to ourselves, "you know what? I don't always long for the Lord that way. I let other things distract me. I don't focus on that full redemption which is such a powerful message from my God." But the psalmist also just puts his hands on each one of our shoulders and he looks us in the eye and says, "With the Lord, there is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins." He assures you and me that God will redeem, in his case, and in our case. He has completely redeemed us from all our sins through the life and death of Christ. All the times that we get so busy with other things that we don't wait for the Lord, all the times that instead of waiting for him to fix it we try to fix things ourselves and only make it worse, all the times that we don't put our hope in his Word, we put our hope in ourselves, in our own wherewithal, in all our abilities, and all the times that we think we know better than the Lord's answer, Christ shed his blood for every last one of them. We are forgiven. We are restored. Our God says, "I have loved you with an unfailing love. You might fail me, but I will never fail you. My love for you is more certain than the rising of the sun."

That is what the psalmist reminds us of. When we see that truth, it encourages you and me to wait for the Lord and make him more of that priority and to put our hope in his Word by being in that Word.

If my car breaks down, a part of waiting is calling someone that can fix it because you can give me all the tools in the world and I'm just going to make it worse. As you and I wait for the Lord, sometimes it's just that—waiting until he fixes things, waiting until he

brings us that brother or sister in Christ with just the right word from God, just the right encouragement, just the right comfort, just the right assurance of forgiveness. Then when it comes, let it thrill you to the tips of your toes because God's unfailing love has been revealed to you again.

Then, as we bask in that unfailing love, when we are focused on that, our wait is more like my wait in the dentist's office this morning—relaxed, enjoying what I can enjoy at that time. You and I can be that way as we go through life because we know we have a God whose unfailing love is at our side.

That is why it is good that we take the time to bask in the light of his love, because we do live in a world of darkness, but his unfailing love is a certain light that gives us hope. That hope is why we have the blue paraments. It reminds us that we have that certain confidence because of God's unfailing love.