

How many of us have gotten impatient when our scheduled appointment comes & goes and we are still in the waiting room? How many of us will go out of our way to avoid stoplights or traffic? How many of us are frustrated with the construction of Interstate 10 or the construction on the bridge to Mid-County? I could go on and on. We could probably spend hours listing the things that causes us to wait that we don't like. And yet how much control do we have over any of it? None. I am impatient. I cannot tell you how much I hate to wait. And yet – just like we cannot make Christmas come any faster Noah and all on the ark just had to wait.

Last week we learned that the flood event was not a simply 40 days and 40 nights event. In fact we got the first sense that it was so much longer. This is something that we can understand and relate to today. This makes 15 weeks that we have been surrounded with data, conversations, decrees, press conferences, etc. all relating to this novel virus. Throughout Genesis chapter 8 we do not hear Noah saying anything. In fact, Noah is listening to God and following instructions. For some of us this absence of complaint might lead us to see Noah as a true saint. For others of us we wonder if the complaining gets left out. Both may be true. We remember that the entire story of Genesis has been edited taking writings from the JP sources in particular. But it is also

important to remember that this narrative is to tell us about who God is and what God does. Even with all of that, we know that Noah was in fact human and imperfect. We know that it had to have been tedious and frustrating. There had to be complaining, even if it isn't recorded in the scriptures. There was so much waiting. Waiting for the water to come, waiting for the rain to stop, waiting for the water to recede, waiting for the mountains, waiting to open the window, waiting for the birds to come back, waiting to open the door.

It's easy for us, being far removed from the story, to forget just how long Noah and those on the ark had to wait. We skip forward to the beautiful story with the rainbow and covenant. And why do we skip ahead because we don't like to wait. However, waiting is important, especially in the story of God. Even before the real waiting begins, God remembers Noah and those on the ark tells us that God keeps promises. Not only does the water stop falling when God said it would but that God breaths over the earth, just as God did in creation.

God breathes on the earth and Noah waits. We hear the story the receding water as it reveals more and more of creation. Remember, how God felt before he called Noah to build the ark? God was heartbroken and grieved. God breaths and then God waits.

We don't know how God feels about waiting but we can assume that God is okay with waiting. Because if God wasn't, God could breathe more on the earth and hurry the water along. There is something important about waiting. Perhaps waiting has some benefits? Several years ago, my fitness app asked me to try a new habit, it asked me to take 3 deep breaths in response to stress. At first, I did it because it was something to do to get more credit in moving to be healthier, but I found that as I took those breaths and waited to respond, something new happened. When I waited, I did not react (usually in the raising of my voice) but could more calmly explain what was going on. I learned that sometimes it took more than a 3 deep breaths but in the breathing and waiting, my responses changed.

God breathed over the earth and the water receded. So what did God in the waiting? God had a change of heart. How do we know – we see it in God's response to Noah's offering. God promised not just to never to curse the ground but how God would deal with humanity going forward. In the time that has passed God is not telling Noah all the things that Noah should be doing differently as they are reproducing and flourishing on the earth. There are not new rules. God breathes and is no longer bringing up the hurt or sadness that weighed on his heart. When God told Noah to go out there were no instructions for Noah to do

anything but to flourish. God breathes, sets things in motion, waits and something changes.

What was Noah doing as he waited for the water to recede? He was feeding and caring for animals but there must have been some soul searching that happened. Have you ever found yourself without any clear direction or perhaps in a situation that scared you? I know that when I have found myself in these situations, I always ask God to save me and when I come through it try to demonstrate my thankfulness. What does Noah do after being brought through the waters with his family? Noah builds an altar to God. This is the first time in the scriptures that this happens. Adam didn't do it. Seth didn't do it. In chapter 5 when we learn of the first man to walk with God, Enoch doesn't build an altar. Noah builds an altar and prepares an offering to God that smells sweet.

As I have prayed and thought through this story this week, I almost imagined it smelled as inviting as pies in the oven at thanksgiving or the smell of a good bbq from a grill outside in the summer. It was a smell that begs you to enjoy something good. And something good indeed is offered, not by Noah but by God.

As we imagined what God did in the waiting, it seems that God is more cautious than he'd been in the previous chapters.

God told Noah that the human heart is bent towards evil. God learned something in the waiting. We don't know how but God knew that the change God wanted to see – truly new creation – did not happen. God would have to do something different.

We could jump forward to the Gospel of Matthew and hear Jesus' teaching on moving from an eye for an eye to turning the other cheek but that's about us and the book of Genesis we're learning about God. God isn't just about starting over with people but God has changed his heart. God learned in the waiting that punishment & cursing didn't get the desired effect. God knew that something else had to change and did the changing. The flood doesn't change the earth or the hearts of humanity. In the time of the water rising and receding, God breathed. God waited just as those on the ark.

What might happen if we simply breathed and waiting? You know that I am not good at waiting. You know that even in the waiting that I want to make plans and be ready to go when the time is right? But what happens when we use waiting time to change our hearts and minds? In nearly every situations we face we get to choose how we respond. I can choose to take deep breaths so I can respond and not react. What happens if we breathe, wait and ask God to change our hearts? What if instead of arguing, we wait patiently? What if in our waiting we ask God

to change our heart? What happens when our hearts are changing we connect more deeply with God? Could it be that our world begins to change?

So much of what we think of Noah has to do with the covenant that is coming in chapter 9. The covenant that comes with a rainbow. But we're not there yet. What if we didn't rush to get to the next part of the story and waited and pondered that God changed? Waiting is holy. Waiting is an important part of the story of God and the story of us. So how will we wait? I will wait patiently turning my heart & mind to God. Will you join me? In the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. Amen.