

Melva's Corner

ARE YOU IN A WAITING PLACE?

December 5, 2005

Bible Text: Psalm 27:14

Central Truth: When we wait on God, we put our hope and trust in Him, confident that He loves us and will keep us safe. And in that confidence, we find rest.

I'm sure you've read the eminent theologian, Theodore Geisel. He was a prolific writer for about half a century. Millions have read his books, and he's still read frequently. Name doesn't ring a bell? Oh, you probably know his pen name. Seuss. Doctor Seuss.

In one of his books, Oh, the Places You'll Go, the Doctor writes about the Waiting Place. Read his words, and see if the place he describes doesn't sound familiar to you . . .

“Waiting for a train to go, or a bus to come, or a plane to go or the mail to arrive, or the rain to stop, or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow or waiting around for a Yes or a No, or waiting for hair to grow.

Everyone is just waiting. Waiting for the fish to bite, or waiting for wind to fly a kite, or waiting around for Friday night or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Henry, or a pot to boil, or a Better Break or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants, or a wig with braids, or Another Chance. Everyone is just waiting.”

The Waiting Place. Yeah, you know it, don't you? The Doctor's been reading your diary, hasn't he? Some of us have season tickets for the Waiting Place. Earn points for Frequent Waiters. Maybe waiting characterizes your life. You wait for clarity of purpose. You wait for a better job. You wait for Someone Special, or Something More Exciting, or Somewhere Nicer. You wait for someone to give you a fair chance, or for someone to notice you. Maybe you wait for a cure, or a glimmer of hope, or forgiveness. Maybe you sit behind steel bars, day after day, waiting until the system says you've done your time.

Maybe you aren't a regular in the Waiting Place, but I bet you know it. You've been there, haven't you? If a doctor's ever told you, "We'll know in 72 hours," then you've been in the Waiting Place. You've been there if your company's ever been bought out and you've wondered if you'll be getting a paycheck a month from now. If you've ever struggled in a class, you know it. You've visited the Waiting Place if your body's ever broken down, if someone you trust has failed you, or if God has been silent.

If you've ever faced an outcome you couldn't foresee and couldn't control, you've been in the Waiting Place. It's not a pleasant place to be. You're forced to sit still, impotent, while circumstances swirl around you. Life, though it may go on, doesn't move forward. Too much is in doubt, too many questions unanswered, too many ends left loose.

If you're in the Waiting Place, the good news is that you aren't alone. Moses waited in the desert of Midian while forty years of his life slipped away before God called him to the work that we still remember him for. Job waited in dust and ashes for an end to or an explanation of his suffering. David waited for decades with only a promise that he'd be king while Saul chased him all over the desert. Peter waited by a seashore after his denial of Jesus.

Faith makes no promises that we'll be spared the Waiting Place. If anything, the Bible shows us that faith often brings us TO the Waiting Place. People of faith are often left waiting while God's plan unfolds, or while He deals with sin in our lives, or while God prepares us for the road ahead, or while He clears the way for us. No, faith doesn't protect us from the Waiting Place. What faith does is to make us reconsider what -- or Who -- we're waiting for. And where we wait.

David wrote the song we know as Psalm 27 while threatened by his enemies. "The LORD is my light and my salvation -- so why should I be afraid?" he asks. The LORD protects me from danger -- so why should I tremble?" With that declaration of his confidence in God, David asks only one thing: "to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life". For David, God's house is a place of delight, safety, joy, and peace. "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me,' and my heart responds, 'LORD, I am coming.'" David pictures himself holding his head high, safely out of the reach of the enemies that surround him.

David's Waiting Place was God's house. When it looked like everything in his life was up in the air, he found refuge waiting in the shadow of the altar, protected in God's sanctuary. Waiting wasn't scary simply because of where he was waiting and Who he was waiting for. "I am confident that I will see the LORD's goodness," he said. "Be brave and courageous, and wait patiently for the LORD."

And that's how faith deals with the Waiting Place. When we wait, we aren't waiting for Fate, or Luck, or Opportunity. We aren't waiting until we're strong or good or until we earn our way back. When we wait, we're waiting for God. We're waiting for His plan to unfold. We're waiting until He finishes what He's doing in us and deems it time for us to go on to the next thing. We're waiting for HIM. We don't have to be afraid; He loves us. We don't have to be anxious; He's in control. We wait upon Him, in His house, worshipping and drawing near to Him.

By the way, the word translated "wait" in this psalm means more than just sitting in one place marking time. It contains elements of hope and rest. When we wait on God, we put our hope and trust in Him, confident that He loves us and will keep us safe. And in that confidence, we find rest.

Isn't it just like God to turn the Waiting Place into a Place of Hope and Rest? Isn't it just like God, who became human and experienced the Waiting Place Himself, to redeem even its dreary darkness? Isn't it just like the God whose Son suffered the Waiting Place of the cross and the tomb to turn even death into life? Next time you're in the Waiting Place, remember the cross. Remember an innocent body bleeding to give you forgiveness, hope, and a future. Get up out of your seat in the Waiting Place and move quietly and reverently into His sanctuary. Worship Him, delight in Him, and pour out your troubles and anxieties. Be brave and courageous, and wait patiently for the LORD.

What -- Who -- Where, are you waiting?

Memory Text

"Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD." (Psalm 27:14)