

## WAITING

Evan Lature



When I was in high school, I ran into a friend who was rehearsing for a play called *Waiting for Godot*. Intrigued by the title, I asked her what was it about. She told me it was about two people, Estragon and Vladimir who engage in some interaction and conversation while waiting for someone named “Godot”. They sit together and try one activity after another in order to avoid boredom and to pass the time in their waiting. Abound in tragic elements (such as failed suicidal attempts) and bitter jokes about life, it was categorized as tragicomedy. To the end of the play, audience learns that the two main characters never see Godot whom they’re waiting for.

Reading that plotline, my mind raced to my recollection of The Parable of the Ten Virgins in the Bible. They were waiting for bridegroom. Five of them are waiting wisely, preparing sufficient oil for their lamps, and the other five are not. Their waiting is over when the bridegroom eventually comes, in contrast to Estragon and Vladimir in “*Waiting For Godot*”.

In fact the Bible has so many accounts of waiting besides the story of the Ten Virgins: Abram and Sara had to wait more than 25 years for Isaac’s birth, Hanna had to wait for God to help her conceive Samuel, David waited for God’s deliverance from Saul so he could become king (Psalm 13:1), and of course Israel nation waited for a Savior. We’re so tempted to ask why does it take so long for God to answer prayers and bring deliverance? Those were questions I have to asked. Why do people wait?; Who/what are they waiting for?; and what makes something worth waiting for?

I believe there’s something in waiting that God chooses for His people. As Christians we believe in His undeniable power. Nevertheless, it keeps us thinking “why wait?” I guess we’re not questioning God’s power nor His willingness to help when it comes talking about waiting so the appropriate question might be **what good is waiting from God’s perspective?**

### **The Nature of Waiting: Can anything good come out of waiting?**

Our world doesn’t like waiting because it’s boring and a waste of time. We want instant results, as if everything can get done in a blink of an eye. But don’t we realize that it takes time for everything? We sleep, we eat, we hang out, we work out, we study. All these activities are demanding time in our life. Waiting, for sure, is equally taking up some time. But interestingly, we reluctantly include “waiting” in the “activity” category. I have never had someone say --when asked what they will be doing for a day, “I’m gonna wait all day long.” Typically, they would say, “I’m gonna run some errands; I’m gonna work; I’m gonna study; I’m gonna do this, do that...” Waiting is not popular in our performance-based world. Most likely because it has some connotation of unproductivity.

Another thing about waiting. We may have heard that disappointment is the gap between reality and expectations. In waiting, the final judgement is suspended. Because it is being suspended, it opens to any possibilities. This is what we call “uncertainties”. In waiting, we deal with uncertainties against our natural desire of craving for comfortableness. There comes a torrent of anxiety when we cannot handle uncertainties well enough.

I watched a Czech movie called “Kolya” a week ago. It follows a relationship between a womanizer old guy Louka who develops a relationship with a 5-year old boy Kolya. The movie took place against a backdrop of the political situation between Russia and Czechoslovakia is when the Russian army invaded Czechoslovakia. Louka is Czech and Kolya is Russian. Louka married Kolya’s mom for money because Kolya’s mom needs Czech citizenship in order to pursue her boyfriend in Germany. Kolya lives with his grandmother in Czechoslovakia when his Mom leaves for Germany. But when his grandmother is sick and has to be hospitalized, he has nobody to take care of him but the womanizer old guy who had married his Mom. His grandmother died without his knowing. All of this time Kolya thinks that he will live temporary with this guy before his grandmother picks him up. Now the little boy is in waiting, fully hoping that his grammie will bring him home someday. In one scene from the movie, when little Kolya makes a “phone call” to his grandmother with a shower sprinkler in the bath tub, I got the sense of the agony of waiting.

## How does God use Our Waiting?

**In waiting, we surrender our instincts to take control.** In waiting, everything is not dependent on our efforts, but control is outside ourselves. For some of us whose upbringing teaches us to “do it, do it, do it” or “if you believe in yourself, you can make it”, we may find ourselves struggling with waiting. Of course, I’m not minimizing that there are things we can do in waiting. If you grow veggies and hope to bear fruit, you can’t just sit, do nothing, and hope that someday your yard will get a harvest for you. You have to dig the soil, make up the bed for the seeds, get the best seeds or starters, water them regularly, fertilize them, tend them from insects and weeds, you wait for them to bear fruit. In waiting, we come before the reality of our liminal nature and respect the Great Power who’s in charge of our lives.

Take a look again at our Scripture for today. The Psalmist wrote, *“We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you”* (Psalm 33:20-22). As he waits on God, he comes back to the heart of worship: **God himself alone.**

Waiting is unattractive because it’s counter-intuitive to our-controlling nature and sadly such attitude has tainted our spiritual life. When we yield our instincts to take control, we become vulnerable. Don’t you know that in a vulnerable point, we’re in the most in need of mercy and grace? **When we become vulnerable in our waiting,** we allow grace and hope to take charge of our lives so that we may gracefully participate in God’s purposes. *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for 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.* ([Isaiah 40:29–31](#))



### Waiting stops us to ponder

In the world where speed and productivity are elevated, waiting is kind of a loser kid that nobody wants to be. “It’s not cool” that’s what they say. A young girl is talking with an older man about her productive and agenda-filled day. This young lady boasts about how she had filled up her day with so many activities and felt satisfied with her achievements. Then the older asks her, “Did you ever stop even for a minute?” To her reply, she boasts about skipping her lunch break due to her crammed schedule.

Soren Kierkegaard once wrote, “Life is understood backwards, but must be lived forwards.” How can we understand our life if we are always busy with our businesses without never stopping? Well, waiting provides a space for us to keep us in perspective.

In waiting we become silent, and in a silence, we can hear voices clearly. David witnessed to that reality.

*“Many, LORD my God, are **the wonders you have done** the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened<sup>[c]</sup>— burnt offerings and sin offerings<sup>[d]</sup> you did not require. Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll.<sup>[e]</sup> I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”* (Psalm 40:5-8)

In waiting, we have a chance to stop and make sense of our lives. David experienced the heavenly perspective of God’s faithfulness throughout his entire life in waiting. And in waiting, his desire was refocused on God’s will.

### My Story

Most of you know my situation with my R-1 visa application. New Hope filed the petition for me last month (May 2018) and now I’m waiting for the results that can take up to 4-9 months. I’m in a powerless and vulnerable position without income and established legal status away from home. It’s been a month of waiting and honestly just like any given ordinary person, I struggle as well with uncertainties. There were times when I doubted and my faith was shaking like a leaf: ‘Will this work?; What am I doing here; Am I not supposed able to do something else?’

As I was struggling with those questions, God reminded me what He has done in my life. It's very obvious that formative episodes in my life took place in waiting. I waited a year before offering my life to be God's minister, I waited two years before coming to Wheaton, and definitely there's a lot of waiting when you deal with college students before they come be committed to Christ. Even going back to my very family history –my Mom and Dad had to wait for 6 years after their marriage before they had my older brother.

All of these waiting episodes teach me that it's not in blessings and gifts, but only in the Giver of gifts alone that my faith is anchored. In waiting, by remembering what He has done in the past, I gain strength, companionship, and comfort. I've been gardening (something that I have never done before); I've been coming across a plethora of helps from people whom God sends; I've been writing songs; I've been experimenting in the kitchen, and I've been kept in perspective. Sometimes, when I am alone, I wonder if this is what a Christian life should look like – waiting for the return of Jesus, our Beloved One?

I opened this sermon with a story of the friend rehearsing for a play called Waiting For Godot. I end the sermon with another encounter that leads me to a beautiful truth about waiting.

Recently I ran into a pop song on Youtube by the Indonesian band "The Rain". It's called Until Now. It's a love song that has a message I will rarely find in today pop songs which are saturated by lust, sex, unrealistic romantic love, do-what-you-wanna-do kind of thing. This song was just different because it said something about waiting in faithfulness. *"I am standing still here / At the place we first met, first time I saw you/ Do you remember that time when you smiled at me?/ That smile has been helping me live my life/ Until now, you're still the only one/ The one who understands me most/ All my ups and downs/ Until now, I am still that person you know with all your heart as you used to/*



For some of us, the lyrics may sound cheesy. Or you might want to call it "hopelessly romantic". That's what I thought, too, at first. But the song had a beautiful melody, so I kept listening to it. On the third repetition, I realized that actually there's a truth in that "hopeless romantic" song: It's faithful waiting is not a fancy thing. The, I remembered a Bible verse that sounds similar with the message of the song, *"Even to your old age and gray hair; I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."* (Isaiah 46:4).

Through a romantic song, God reminded me that there's such a thing as faithfulness. Humans fail it, they think they are faithful in their waiting, but actually they're not. We fall, stumble, fumble, and are impatient. But our God is very patient toward us. He's the one who's waiting for us faithfully with love and grace that He pours lavishly unto us.

Are you in waiting? Remember this, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to the completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6).

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