

Genesis 8:6-19 *The Discipline of Delay* 10/15/17

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. ¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. ¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

¹³ In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” ¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

(Pastor prays)

There are very few things that inconvenience us more than the irritation of being delayed – especially when we are trying to get somewhere: a delayed flight, a person at a stoplight checking his phone and not seeing it turn green and just sitting there. Road rage is really nothing more than the pure frustration of someone getting in my way when I’m trying to get somewhere... to be held back in school or passed over for a promotion or to have to wait for someone to finish paperwork so you can get on with it, whatever “it” is.

The giant company Amazon is constantly working on how to get our “stuff” to us quicker so we don’t have to wait because they know this truth: humans don’t like to be delayed. Part of our ungoverned human nature is to want things *now* and it doesn’t have to be

selfish things. Even among the best of us, we sometimes wonder: Why God is making me wait for a husband? Why do I have to kiss so many frogs before I find a prince? Or, as a young Christian couple, you wonder: Why is God making us wait for a family or to own a home? As an 18-, 19- or 20-year-old it's the wanting to get out on your own. Why do I have to wait? Of course, some wait too long and it is then the *parents* asking why. Why does God delay? Why does He make us wait?

In the story before us we are watching God work with a man named Noah and his family. God saved them from the overwhelming flood and they have been on the ark for quite some time. In verse 4 of Chapter 8, the ark came to rest on the mountain of Ararat and it had to feel like this long ordeal was over. Verse 5 says the waters are receding, and in feels like Noah and his family are going to finally get out of that ark and be free.

But as you read from verse 6 to 19, it's one delay after another before they are finally free. And this passage, and I hope the message, show us that the Devil might be in the details, but God is in the delays. And the more we crucify – listen, our religion is a faith centered on Jesus Christ who died on the cross in the place of sinners and all of us that are called to follow Him. We are called to crucify the flesh, the agendas, the hurry and even some hopes, to crucify expectations and to trust God's timing, His purpose, His love and His will. I hope you can see that:

Even in the Delay, Our God is Good

All of Life Is a Test

It really does seem like that sometimes: all of it, that God tests us. He gives opportunity over opportunity for us to display out trust in His sovereign hand. He tests us to see our faith in action, our love to see if it is real. He does that in the story of Noah. You see it right up front in Noah's life. There is a statement that should sound familiar in verse 6. Let's read it.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made. 40 days. I've heard that before. Well in Genesis 7:4 God told Noah, For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights. Twice in this story the time of testing and trusting is 40 days.

So, part of reading the bible is to ask questions. Is this important? Why is it here? Is it thematic? Where else is the time frame of 40 days used? And in what capacity? So, I started looking all over the Bible.

In Exodus 34, when God renews His covenant and Moses intercedes for the people after they sinned, Exodus 34:28 says, *So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*

In the Book of Numbers, when God has given Israel the promised land, Moses sent spies into the promised land and Numbers 13:25 says, *At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land.*

In the story of David and Goliath, when Goliath was terrorizing Israel, Samuel tells us in 1 Samuel 17:16, *For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.*

Elijah spent 40 days on Mt. Horeb, Ezekiel laid on his right side for 40 days to symbolize Judah's sin. When Jonah went through Nineveh, he told them "40 days and God is going to destroy Nineveh."

Even (regarding) the Lord Jesus, Matthew tells us in Matthew 4:1-3, *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*

All through the Bible you see the term "40 days" and every time it has to do with a test.

Turn back to Genesis 8:6 and we know that God is testing Noah. The delay is a test. It is important for you to see this. God making you wait is *not* a punishment. It's not a game He's playing or a trick. It's a loving Father who sees all things and delays for our good and His glory.

So, what do you do in the delay? The testing is not so much about you as it is about God. The test you are going through is not to see how *strong* you are but for you to see how *good* God is. I'd like to suggest two words to help you and help me as we live in the delay and are waiting.

Trust

Trust is believing the best when the evidence suggests the worst, believing that God is good in the midst of bad, that He alone has the power to work in tragedy and even through other people's sinful behavior while remaining completely holy, His providence that He really is working all things together for good. He didn't redeem you to drop you. He didn't purchase you to punish you. "He began a good work in you and will bring it to completeness." You know the promise in Proverbs 3:5-6, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* Do you trust him?

Timing

God's timing is often different from ours.

In verses 13 and 14, we see Noah trusting and waiting on God's timing. One thing you notice in the passage is the continual mention of time. Verse 5 says 10th month. Verse 6 says 40 days. Verse 10, another 7 days, verse 12 another 7 days and finally in verse 13, he uncovers the ark. Noah is breathing freely again. The ground is obviously dry, but verse 14 says he has to wait almost two more months.

It looked like it was dry enough but looks are deceiving. The oasis you are gazing at could be a mirage. God sees what we can't see, and you are not ready for the next step until God says you're ready.

I refer to the story of Lazarus a good bit because it has so many illustrative angles. But this morning, I want to close with the first part. Let me read John 11:1-6 to you and you listen to the story:

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Delay. Are you willing to go through the testing and wait on God's timing and do it all for His glory? Is it going to be okay with your soul if you don't get your heart's desire

but God is glorified in your pain? Is that going to be okay with you? Do you trust God is working? Have you trusted in the saving work of Christ and the love of God that is in Christ? And is that love treasure enough for you? Do you believe what Paul says in Romans 5:6, *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

I've introduced two words – trust and timing. I want to close with putting these two words together. You can trust God's timing. As I did last week, I'd like to do again. This is a two-fold invitation.

Today's message is designed for two groups of people: for Christians who are struggling with delay, this is an invitation for someone to pray *with* you and *for* you. For those of you who are confused and not sure where you stand spiritually, this is an invitation for you to have a conversation with our pastors and leaders, so you can find out what it means to give your life to Christ.

Let me explain. God is the Creator. He is Holy, Loving and Kind.

You were made in the image of God, but sin has disfigured you and you are in need of help that only God can give.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. He is fully God and fully man. He lived a sinless life, fulfilling God's laws. He earned righteousness and then died in the place of sinners, receiving and accepting God's punishment for sinners.

Now there needs to be a response. For this to mean anything to you, something has to happen. You must repent (turn from your sins) and believe (trust that what Christ has done will save you).

(Pastor prays)