

Waiting for Wind Acts 1:2-4
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(Long pause) How are you doing? All right? Were you a little bit nervous? It was an entire minute from the time you stopped clapping and the band left until when I got up. That was a long frustrating minute. How come? Why does that bug us? You can be honest with me--I'm your pastor. It kind of bugged you. How come?

Something's supposed to be happening now. Was something happening? Maybe something was happening. You were worried, weren't you? After a few seconds you realize: *Maybe he's up to something.* And you think: *I don't want to be a bad illustration for a sermon.* But at first, I'd think you'd be a little bit miffed, a little mad, because when a person makes you wait for them, what are they doing? They are assuming that their agenda is more important than your agenda. That's why servants wait on masters, not masters on servants.

Some of you may have thought: *I'm okay with waiting if someone explains it to me. If someone gets up and says 'Okay we're going to wait for sixty seconds and then we're going to talk about waiting.' I'd be okay with that.* But if someone just makes you wait, and they don't explain why you're waiting, then it takes a lot of faith or trust in that person to wait. So, who are we waiting for in worship?

I have to tell you I had a lot of trouble with that minute. I was really fidgety, because I'm the pastor, and it's my job to make stuff happen for you. I really *want* stuff to happen for you. People come to me and say, *"I think the Lord is doing this or that with our church. I think the Lord is going to do this,"* but I hear: *"Pastor, make the Lord do this. Make it happen."*

I can't make it happen. And I hate waiting—I think I'm an impatient kind of person, so I work really hard at sleeping. I strive to rest. I fight for peace, to surrender. I hurry up and wait.

Last week when I was in my leisure suit, I asked the question, *"Is that what the angels meant when they were talking to those disciples? Did they mean hurry up and wait?"* And I said, *"Maybe, maybe not."* When I first wrote my notes I said, *"I don't think so."* But then I erased it because I thought about it more and thought: *Maybe. Maybe they meant hurry up and get to that place of waiting. Like waiting should be the very top of your priority list. It's there that all the other priorities fall into place, kind of like a Sabbath. You shall work six days and then you shall wait, rest.*

It's interesting that in the New Testament after Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath rises from the dead. The church very soon started waiting on the first day, then working or hurrying and witnessing on the last six. Wait, then work. Wait, then witness.

Acts, Chapter I: *"In my former book Theophilus,"* Luke writes, *"I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his sufferings, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."*

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Don't leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (pneuma in Greek) The word can be translated: wind, breath, spirit. It's used to translate the Hebrew word *ruach* which also means wind, breath, spirit, the

ruach that hovered over the face of the waters in Genesis, Chapter I, at creation. Like the breath that God breathed into Adam when he became a *nephesh*, a living soul, a spirit, a wind, a human being. The *ruach* that blew over the Red Sea making way for the Israelites to leave slavery and journey to the promised land, the wind Ezekiel prophesied to that came and blew on the valley of dry bones. The bones came together and they lived.

And Jesus, sitting one night with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, said “*Nicodemus, you must be born of the wind.*” And now Jesus says, (paraphrase) “*Guys, don’t leave Jerusalem, but go and wait, for you are going to be baptized in that wind, baptized with the Holy Spirit.*”

Acts I: 6-14: “*So when they met together they asked him, ‘Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It’s not for you to know the times or dates, the father has set these by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.’*”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them, ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? The same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath’s day’s walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”

They waited together in prayer for the wind. How rude! Jesus can be pretty impolite, can’t he? Have you discovered that? He has just ascended to the right hand of the Father; he knows some stuff. He could have said, “*Hey the wind is going to come at 246 Jerusalem drive. This is the address. It’s going to come on Pentecost, you know when the feast is. It’s going to come at 9:30. We respect your time--we’re going to have you out by 10:30--and childcare is provided.*” He could have said that, but no.

That’s just like God, isn’t it? Four hundred years they were slaves, waiting for the wind to blow. Forty years Moses in the backside of the wilderness and his own life waiting for the wind to blow. And forty more years after they’d gone through the Red Sea, waiting to enter *the promised land*, following, depending on this wind, the pillar of wind. Waited.

That’s frustrating--because we’re Americans. We stand in front of the microwave and get mad. *Why does this thing take so stinking long?* We don’t plant grain and wait for the harvest. We go through the drive-through. Why? Because we’ve got things to do. These disciples had things to do, too. They were witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. That is a lot. Not to mention they’d just finished a three year work-study program with Jesus, the Messiah, Himself. And this is the message they get: *Hurry up and wait, go wait. Wait!* So they did.

They went to a room, maybe the Upper Room, and for days they just prayed. We know they did a few other things; they cast lots for a disciple. They didn’t use that method very soon, but they waited and they prayed.

How long would it be? They must have wondered that. Jesus had told them a few days. With the Lord a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. They had hung out with Jesus for quite a while and he lived like that. He was never in a hurry, it

seemed, never frantic about anything. How long would it be? Wait, why do we have to wait? Why are you setting us up to wait? What good is in waiting? I don't know. What's more I'm not sure I'm supposed to be sure I know. But I do know this: *when we wait, we surrender. We surrender our agenda to the Lord's agenda-- the person we're waiting for. We surrender our time to His time, and he makes all things beautiful in his time. But it's His time.*

That frustrates me. *His time.* I go and visit other churches on my vacations or study-leave at times. I go in and sit down with my family. I've got a lot to do, it's my vacation and I want to enjoy myself. And I don't say this out loud, because then I'd have to rebuke myself, but I know I'm thinking it because I sit there and think to myself: *Okay, you've got an hour and fifteen minutes, preacher and choir, you'd better make this worthwhile.*

Worth whose while? Who's waiting on who? A member of Rabbi Abraham Heschel's synagogue came to him one day, a bit miffed about the liturgy--the service, the songs they sang. He said the liturgy didn't really express what he felt. *Would he change it-- make it more relevant?*

The great rabbi responded this way. He said, *"It's not for the liturgy to express what you feel. It is for you to learn to feel what the liturgy expresses."*

That's an interesting thought. If that's true, then my job isn't so much to make the wind blow on your feelings and your problems, as much as to: *tell you about the wind, remind you about the wind in the hope you would give up your feelings and your problems to the wind. And that you'd get caught in the wind, rather than making sure the wind gets caught, somehow, in you.*

Whose agenda are you here for? Who waits on who? In waiting we surrender our agenda to the one we wait for. That takes patience. The Bible says patience is a fruit, something the Holy Spirit produces. Where does the Holy Spirit produce patience? There, maybe? And why wait? We do know a lot happens when we wait. Janelle Hallman from our church lent me a tape of her speaking somewhere. She reminded me in the tape that in Deuteronomy, Chapter 8, God tells the Israelites why they had to wander, waiting in the wilderness for forty years.

He says (paraphrase) *"I led you in the wilderness forty years to humble you, that you would surrender your agenda to my agenda. And to make you hunger, wait for food. Then I fed you manna, quail--in the long run a land flowing with milk and honey--but first I made you hunger. I made you thirst, made you wait."* Waiting deepens our longings, purifies our desires. It focuses our attention and then when we get what we wait for, it is so much sweeter.

Fasting increases our love and gratitude for food. Gluttony does the opposite. Wait, wait for food, wait for a lover, wait for your honeymoon night. What are you talking about, why wait for that? There are a lot of reasons, but I think this is a good one: *I think that is the greatest physical pleasure you'll ever experience in this world. And it is that much sweeter for your waiting. All your life sweeter--wait for your bridegroom, wait for your bride, wait for that pregnancy test to turn blue...*

I remember those stupid little strips of paper every month for a year--waiting for that thing to turn blue. When we started that whole deal, I didn't really care that much whether we had children any time soon. At the end of the year, I just longed to be a daddy, feel those little kisses, those hugs around my neck. Waiting for children, waiting for a wave on a surfboard; have you ever done that? When we wait for something, it becomes bigger and better to us. *When we wait with patience, our appetite becomes stronger, our desires are purified, our passions are intensified. When we wait for a thing we usually find we are waiting for something larger than us,*

beyond us, more mysterious than us. The waiting reminds us the thing we wait for is a gift. It's a grace.

So, if you insist on living your entire life rigidly, according to your day-timer, you'll have a boring life. You will learn to hate things like the wind, the weather, and what does not fit on the little lines in your day-timer. Your desires will all be smaller and weaker than you, too weak to be called Christian desires. Don't do that. Don't give up on waiting. Some of you have been waiting all of your life for your bride or your bridegroom. Some of you have blown your entire fortune on those pregnancy tests. (They were pretty expensive.) You've spent all your money on them, but they've never turned blue.

And you long so deeply and yearn with such great hunger that you can hardly stand it. Give your longing and your yearning and your desires to the Lord. Let Him shape those desires and give you the desires of your heart. I believe that also means He gives you their fulfillment and one day, if not in this world, He will fulfill all those desires in a way beyond your wildest dreams. And when He does, it will be that much sweeter because of all your years of waiting. We miss so much because we refuse to wait.

How many of you were saying, *"I am so thankful for my breath."* How many of you were thinking that? On the count of three, everyone needs to hold their breath. One, two, three. (Long pause) *Okay, you can breathe.* How many of you, right now, are just thankful for your breath? You sit here going, *"I really like breathing."* If you've ever played sports and you got the wind knocked out of you, do you remember what it's like to be lying there on that field going, *"Oh God, I really want to breathe again."* You don't know when your breath is going to come back. You seek breath with every ounce of energy in your body, the wind.

Jeremiah 29:13 *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with your whole heart."*

"For God alone," David says, *"my soul waits in silence. Oh God, my God, I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where no water is because your love is better than life."*

And the prophet Joel long ago, waiting, hungering, yearning, prophesied this: *"One day, in the last day, I will pour out my spirit, my wind, on all flesh."* So Jesus says, (paraphrase) *"Guys, I want you to go to Jerusalem and wait for that wind, that wind that blew on the face of the waters. You wait, and don't you witness about me until you wait."*

Would you wait on the wind? Are you kind of scared of the wind? The wind can mess up your hair. All my children, except Coleman, were born at *John Muir Medical Center* in Walnut Creek, California. John Muir was probably the most famous naturalist of the last century. He wrote eloquently about the natural wonders along the west coast of North America. I read that in 1874 he was invited to a friend's cabin up in the Sierra mountains above the Yuba River on the edge of the wilderness. It was December, and a storm was coming in off the Pacific Ocean. If you've lived in California, you know those storms can be incredibly powerful, violent and dangerous.

This friend had a cabin, designed for a storm such as that--to sit in the comfort of this cabin behind a pane of glass and watch the incredible wonders outside--as the wind whipped the trees and the rain beat against the cabin. You snuggled by the fire and later you wrote about your experience. But John Muir left the cabin and walked out into the woods. He found the tallest Douglas Fir tree he could find, and he climbed to the top. And he waited on the wind. Relishing, experiencing—the weather. And then, he wrote about it. *He waited, he witnessed it, and then witnessed of it.*

What's church? A cabin in which we look out through the window of scripture upon the great things the wind has done? We get everybody out by 10:30 and childcare is provided? *Or is church more like a tall tree--where you're invited to climb and hang on for dear life--and call on the wind?*

And so the disciples, Mary, and the other women sat in that upper room holding the longings of a race. Think of that, the longings of the Jews, the yearnings of a people, the children of God, for three thousand years. Holding those longings, they waited for that wind. And when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound, like the blowing of a violent wind, came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the holy wind, the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

The wind came and blew around them and in them and through them and right out to the people on the streets in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, the ends of the earth, and across the sea even to places like this--this very day. And they rode the wind. *They that wait on the Lord will mount up with wings like eagles and ride the wind.*

The history of the church, the true church, is the history of the wind, and where it's blown and who's gotten caught up in it. And so, let's wait on the wind.

That's kind of weird; where is the wind? In a sense, it's right here. If it wasn't here, we'd all be dead, right? It's just that it's still. And if it wasn't here, we'd have the wind knocked out of us, and we'd all keel over, right? We live in the wind, survive in the wind, our being exists in the wind. Paul wrote this in the book of Acts: *"In Him, we live and move and have our being."*

And John said this, *"The light that enlightens all men was coming into the world."*

Really, Jesus and His Spirit are like the atmosphere that holds all things together, that brings life. We would die without it, especially those of us who are Christians, for we live in it. And yet at Pentecost--the wind blew. The Spirit moved in a new and a powerful way, and they became creatures of the wind. And it's blowing for the rest of the New Testament, but not always blowing in the same way. Sometimes the wind blows gently. You have to lick your finger and hold it up to see which way it's going.

Sometimes the wind, the Spirit, makes a person administrate well. We forget that. *Same Spirit.* Sometimes that same Spirit makes a person prophesy well. And kindergarten teacher, tell kids about Jesus with love, His Spirit. Whenever you cry Abba Father, Daddy Father, it's the Spirit, Paul says. If you say Jesus is Lord, John tells you *"You can't do that on your own, the Spirit did that."*

Sometimes you can sense it here in worship, a reminder that more is going on than just meets the eye. Sometimes it's gentle, but sometimes it's violent. There is incredible power in wind. You live in this area, you ought to know that--tornadoes, cyclones, hurricanes, explosions, wind, the very same wind. Get this: *the very same atmosphere that is right here in this room a couple of months ago could have been a cyclone in the Far East. The very same wind that is teaching your kindergartner downstairs about the love of Jesus breaks the gates of hell and drives demons in terror. That blows me away. I've seen it.*

And some of you have seen the wind blow through you and do just incredible things, but all of you that call on the name of Jesus and trust in Him, that's your wind, too. The Father gives it to you. *The wind.* Once the wind literally pinned me to the ground, the Spirit of God. I couldn't believe it. It pinned me to the ground and I couldn't get up. And the same wind whispered in my soul, *"Peter, I love you. My wind is blowing all the time."*

One night when this building was being built, the wind came along and blew it down. *The wind doesn't always blow the direction we want it to.* And if you are committed to the ground, a creature of this world, committed to this world and this ground, the wind can kill you. However, if you're a creature of the wind, like a butterfly, fragile little butterfly, bug, swallow, or eagle, and you spread those wings, you can mount up and ride that wind in peace all the way to Kansas, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

So, Jesus says: *Wait for the wind. I want you riding my wind, my power when you witness. In that wind is power, and in that wind is truth.* We can witness of Jesus in such a way that people know the words and never hear the truth--because we do not ride his wind. Sometimes people will convey my words but not my spirit. I wish they never would have spoken at all; it drives me nuts. And I do that to other people.

How Jesus must cringe when we speak his words and his name, but we don't ride his spirit. It's power, truth and relevance when we wait on the wind. And this is incredible--we find that the wind has been waiting on us. The wind, himself, (and this is interesting concerning my first point that when we wait on him he waits on us) the wind applies truth to us. The first disciples spoke power and truth, and they spoke it in the language of the people that were listening. Talk about relevance.

I can try to witness out of my own fear and insecurity--sometimes I think it's just like a ball of lead. Yet, there are other times when I get to ride the wind. And it's peace, and power, and truth, and relevance. Only the wind can truly bring a soul to Christ. And so, the whole work of the whole Gospel is the work of the Spirit. And that's the whole work of the church, and that's really my whole job. And so, I really want the wind to blow. But I can't make it blow, and that's frustrating to me.

It's very tempting at times to fake it. *"You feel that! Hallelujah! Praise God, feel the wind blow, the brush of angel wings, woooh."* It's tempting to fake it, tempting to make it. *"Oh, you have received your healing. I know you can't see, but you received your healing."* Jesus didn't say stuff like that.

He said, *"You still can't see, let me pray some more. Wait some more."* So, it's tempting to fake stuff and to make up stuff. Then when you get really impatient, it's tempting to deny stuff. *"Oh there's no wind anymore, that ceased with the apostles. There is no wind anymore."* And all the while Jesus says, *"Would you wait? I want you to wait for my wind. Keep waiting."*

In Chapter 4 of the Book of Acts, (we'll get to this) they're gonna pray, and I guess they're waiting again, because they get filled again with the wind, the Spirit. If they get filled in Chapter 4, and they've already been filled in Chapter 2, what does that tell you about Chapter 3? *They leaked.*

It's just simple geometry. And we live after Pentecost, the other side of Pentecost. And we leak. Our life is to be a rhythm of waiting, then witnessing, and then waiting, and then working. And then waiting and telling more all our lives--*the rhythm of waiting is built into our lives. Waiting is a disposition of the heart we can carry with us all the time.*

At the same time, it's a commitment of time. I hope you have time in your schedule individually, set aside to just go wait--everyday.

But at Pentecost, they didn't wait individually. At Pentecost they were all waiting together for days. That's significant. *Constantly praying together, they were expecting, desiring, longing together. And together they couldn't make the wind blow, but they could set their sails together. They could spread their wings together, so when the wind blew, they were blown together.*

Waiting in patience is worship. It's the first thing, I believe, God calls us to. That's why on the back of our church bulletin, under *Our Strategy to Equip You*: Number 1-- *Worship*. So, I want us in 1999 to commit our time and the dispositions of our hearts to worship. Be faithful. When you come, don't just stand there staring at the words, staring in the sky, looking at your watch. Give your heart and your soul to the songs, praises, prayers, and to the sermon. I mean that. I do this for other guys when they're preaching. If it needs help, I'll go, "*Help him, God, help him.*" I do that inside, and God does.

Preaching is something I don't do by myself. We do it together. We're speaking the words of truth, reminding ourselves of the words of truth. So, commit to worship, sing the songs, pray the prayers, give your heart, observe your Sabbath, and call to the wind. Wait for the wind.

If you're like me, you're saying, "*What if the wind doesn't blow?*" Well, the wind will blow, it has blown, and it is blowing. Jesus said it's the promise of the Father. And He also said this in another place, (paraphrase) "*If you ask the Father for the Spirit, will he not give it to you? If you ask a good father for bread will he give you a stone? No, he'll give it.*" The wind will blow, and it's blowing, and it will blow in new ways, in wonderful ways, maybe gentle, maybe strong, I'm not sure. And we don't always know the direction it will blow. And whither it cometh and whither it goeth, I don't know. But it will blow. But just for arguments sake, before we end, what if you wait and wait and wait some more and it doesn't blow? What then?

Seven years ago, I walked to the back gate of our house in Danville, California. I had come home really late that night doing something over at the church all day. I always came home that way through the back gate, and walked across our back yard into the house. This night I looked in the grass, and there was my favorite short-sleeved, blue shirt. I got it at Mervyn's. It was in the grass, and I'm going "*What the...?*" So, I went inside and Susan was still awake. I said, "*Honey, my favorite blue shirt was lying in the grass. What's the deal with that?*"

She said, "*Oh, I'm glad you found it. I wanted to tell you about that. Today, around about lunchtime, Elizabeth came up to me, (she was about 2-years-old at the time) and she said, 'Mommy, when's Daddy coming home?' I told her, 'Honey, he's got a busy day today, I don't think he's going to be home for a long time.'*" And then Elizabeth said: "*I'll go wait for Daddy.*" "*Honey, it's going to be a long time.*" "*But, I want to go wait for Daddy!*"

Susan argued with her, and finally she said "*Okay.*" She watched as Elizabeth toddled over to the dirty clothes pile and pulled out my dirty favorite short-sleeved, blue shirt. I guess it smelled like my wind, or something. And she carried it out to the back gate. She wasn't allowed to go out of the gate, but she was allowed to wait at the gate. She just started looking through the cracks for me. Susan watched her for a while. Then she left.

When she came back, Elizabeth was still there, lying on her back holding the shirt staring in the sky. Then she'd get up and look through the crack for a while. Then she'd lie down and stare at the sky, holding the blue shirt. Finally, Susan, thinking *poor little kid*, made her some snacks and took them out to her.

Elizabeth was surrendering her 2-year-old agenda--she must have had a lot of faith in me. And she was yearning for me, longing for me. So, she ate her snacks, stood up and lay down, looked through the cracks. Susan said, "*Peter, she was out there 3 or 4 hours. She only came in because finally I made her come in. It was getting dark and she had to have dinner and go to bed.*"

Now, 4 hours is like a lifetime to a 2-year-old. And I didn't walk through the gate. She didn't get what she waited for that day. But I did. Because I kissed her little cheek that night while she lay there sleeping, and I realized I did. *I waited a long time for that kiss.* Do you have any idea how long the Father has been waiting for you? And how intently? So intently that in the fullness of time he laid aside his agenda of glory, if you could call it that, and hung on a cross outside of Jerusalem. And in the fullness of time he sent his Spirit to draw you to Himself, and win you to Himself.

And in the fullness of time you will go to him, you who were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Do you know how long that is? According to cosmologists that's like 10 billion years. Do you realize how long the Father has been waiting to kiss your cheek, child of God? Could you then not wait an hour for Him? Now it's the other side of Pentecost, could you not wait an hour or two even with Him?

Father, we thank you that when we wait on you, you reveal to us that you have been waiting on us forever. Would you forgive us, Father, for being so preoccupied with our own agenda that we have desired to turn you into a thing that fits into our day-timer? Even when you are the lover of our souls. Lord God, help us to carve out time in our day-timers to wait for you. But may our whole lives, Lord, be a longing, a yearning for you.

Lord Jesus, help us as a church to show up here in worship and make us hunger, then feed us. Lord, we thank you that your wind blows. It does blow, but Lord God, we ask you, could we get more of your wind, more of you? So, Lord Jesus, we ask you. We call to the wind, we prophesy to the wind like Ezekiel did. You said we could ask, we could long, and that your wind would come. We ask: come wind of God and blow on us your people, your garden.

Benediction...At the end of sermons people want you to get practical, tell them what to do this week.

Wait.

Elizabeth was 2-years-old and she knew exactly what to do to thrill my heart. She didn't need a method or a formula. she just did it.

Maybe for you, you're going to spend some time waiting, driving in your car. Or sitting alone in your basement, going for a walk, I don't know. *And we're going to work to wait together.*

That's what worship is.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.