

Saturday is not Setback

If you have your Bibles, go with me to Luke chapter twenty-three beginning in verse fifty. Today we celebrate the greatest event in history, Resurrection Sunday. We have reflected on the violence and sorrow of Good Friday and today we thank God for the victory of the grave...but what about Saturday? Saturday was silent. Saturday was full of fear, doubt, and mystery. Saturday challenged the faith and peace of everyone who claimed to follow Jesus.

50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

-Luke 23:50-56 NASB1995

Nikki and I have been married for over twenty years now. It feels like just yesterday we were at the altar. Nikki and I had a short engagement...about eleven months. I have some friends who only dated for three months and got married and are still married to this day. Then I have other friends who are my age and have never had a steady girlfriend. But if you are or if you know someone who is wanting to get married, I have a simple trick to find out if they really are the one for you. What you need to do is put the person you are wanting to marry in a room with an older computer and very slow and spotty WIFI. You are either going to discover that the person you want to marry is a very patient person, or you will see demons manifest.

We, as a society, have shot ourselves in the foot. Life is too convenient. We have microwaves that can zap our food in a minute and with hardly any waiting we can eat and be on our way. We have these super computers called cell phones that if we are busy and hungry we can order food from anywhere and have it delivered to our door...without even talking to the delivery person. I was on amazon the other day needing to order something for the church. I think it was napkins. I ordered the 1,000 count and there was a free option to have the napkins delivered within two hours! Did you ever think there would be a day when you can order something online and have it in your possession within two hours? It's crazy and this world is getting faster and faster. The only thing in our world that takes forever is construction on I35. Many of you need to be like I35 and never stop working on yourselves.

In our modern society we have shortened Desire – Action – Fulfillment. If you want popcorn for a snack, that is your desire. The action is putting the food in the microwave. The fulfillment is getting your snack in under three minutes. Amazon...you have a desire to buy something. You find it and the action is you hit “buy now.” The fulfillment is next day or two-hour delivery. The problem is that most of our desire, action, and fulfillment is lightning speed. Not only have we forgotten how to slow down, but we fall apart whenever we experience any kind of delay.

I spent a lot of time this past week studying delays and God's provision. I was absolutely shocked at how many people in the Bible had to wait on the Lord and feel like there was a delay. Abraham was told he was going to be a father of many nations even though his wife was barren. It wasn't until Abraham was 100 years old that he had his promised son. Joseph was trafficked by his own brothers and left in a prison to rot for years. At the right time, he became second in command of all of Egypt and saved the people of Israel from starvation. King David was anointed as king of Israel before he fought Goliath as a teenager. But it wasn't until he was around 30 that he actually took the throne. What if Joseph broke out of prison because he had had enough? What if David got tired of waiting and killed Saul so he could take the throne. It would have all been outside of God's perfect and divine timing.

One thing is certain in this life...you and I need to learn how to thrive in the waiting periods of life. We need to learn how to declare God is good and powerful even when our circumstances say otherwise. The followers of Jesus didn't do so well when Jesus died on the cross. Even though Jesus said it over and over again that yes, He would die, BUT He would be raised from the dead only three days later. Even though Jesus made it very clear, the disciples and others still doubted and ran in fear. Saturday was the sabbath and it was a day of rest. That's why in Luke and the other Gospel accounts it says that Friday was a "day of preparation." Everyone had to rush to get everything ready for sabbath because when evening hit Friday night, they couldn't work. They had to rest. Mary and the other ladies rushed to prepare spices for Jesus. Spices were put on dead bodies at that time because they did not embalm their dead. Mary and the ladies didn't seem to have a lot of hope that this Jesus they loved was actually going to be raised from the dead. Death seemed very real and a resurrection seem but only a dream. The disciples and the ladies should not have questioned that Jesus would be raised. They should have had confident expectation with joy. I mean, just a few days earlier, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. If you still have your Bible available go with me to John 11 beginning in verse 3. I used John 11 two weeks ago in my sermon title "Selah for the Soul." I spoke about the power of the pause in our lives and how we need to slow down in our lives. But we can't just slow down. We need to be confident in the silence, joyful in the mystery, and expectant in the delay. Let's read 3 verses here and see what Jesus did when He heard Lazarus was deathly ill:

3 So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. -John 11:3-6 NASB1995

Right before holy week began Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus had been dead for four days. What is crazy is that Jesus *delayed* in going to heal Lazarus. Mary and Martha said that if Jesus hadn't delayed, Lazarus wouldn't have died. By delaying, Jesus gave Martha and Mary something greater than physical healing. He gave them a deeper revelation of His power. Jesus was about to die, and He was showing them that He has power even over death.

God wants to bless you in the delay, prepare you in the delay, and show Himself powerful in the delay. The problem is that He will not force us to be successful in the delay. You and I need to

build our faith and endurance in the delays of life so that we can walk in God's perfect will and timing.

Today you may be struggling with a delay. Why can't I get the job I have been praying for? Why am I still single? Why can't I ever get ahead of my bills? Why won't this depression leave? If you are struggling with the delays in life, be encouraged. Silent Saturday is not a setback. Silent Saturday teaches us that good things are coming if we wait on the Lord. I want to help and encourage you this morning so if you are taking notes, please fill out point number one:

POINT #1 – Delay is not Denial.

God's delays at times can be for our benefit and protection. Think about the Israelites leaving the bondage of Egypt. If they walked every day from Egypt to the land of Canaan it would have taken about eleven days. Yet because of the Israelites lack of faith and trust in the Lord, it took forty years to enter the Promised Land. The entire first generation never even made it. Because they didn't fully trust God, the Lord couldn't let them walk the coastal route to the Promised Land because they would have seen giants in the land and turned back. The first generation of Israelites could have easily made it into the Promised Land, but they complained, they bowed to false idols, and they questioned God's motives all along the way. Be careful of this family, we can often prolong our delays when we deflect obedience. Sometimes we need to chill out and remember that if God were to give us what we wanted when we wanted it, it might ruin us. If I were to buy a new car and give it to my 19-year-old son, that would be a very good thing. He would be over the moon with joy. But if I were to give a new car to my 9-year-old son...very bad thing. The 9-year-old may cry and complain and say that I am such a bad dad for not giving him a car. But my delay is for his protection.

Many have said that the true definition of depression is being convinced that things will always be this way and nothing will ever change. If we are not careful, we can get that way with God. The delay seems so long, and we start wondering if God even cares. Just because God is delaying doesn't mean He is denying your request or prayer. Let me ask you a couple of questions. First, does God sleep? No, He doesn't. Does God ever stop working? No, He doesn't. So, if God never sleeps or slumbers, if God is always working...then what does that say about our accusations that He is inactive in our lives? You have to convince yourself that when you are waiting on God, God is working. When you wait, God goes to work. We need to stop saying "God is delaying" and instead saying "God is working." The next time you feel God is not answering your prayer you need to say, "God is working."

So, in the waiting, in the delay you need to be convinced that God is able and that heaven is never in short supply. Delay is not denial. God wants to do something *in* you before He does something *for* you. There is much to gain in the delays of life. Please fill out number two in your notes:

POINT #2 – Delay provides Discovery.

When you face a delay, you should not say, "God why are you ignoring me? Why are you not answering me? Instead, we need to ask God "what are you showing me?" **Waiting on God**

shapes our character, reveals our motivation, and purifies our intentions. When Jesus delayed in going to heal Lazarus from his sickness, He gave Martha and Mary the opportunity to see a deeper revelation. The revelation was that Jesus was not only a healer...He was a dead raiser. If Jesus didn't delay, they would not have known firsthand that Jesus is more powerful than death.

Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." The promise God gave us is that if we seek Him, He can give us revelation that we did not know. The problem is that in the delays of life we often take our focus off of God and onto a future solution to our problem. We stop seeking God and we start obsession over an answer to the delay. Do you want God to show up immediately or unmistakably? Sometimes the longer He waits the greater the impact will be.

POINT #3 – Delay builds Dependence.

I think everyone in this room has gone through a long season of difficulty. At one point in that process, you probably got tired, hopeless, and discouraged. You may have cried out "God I'm done, and I need You to come through for me." Do you know how many problems we could have avoided in life if we treated prayer like a first priority rather than a last resort? I heard this little story of a young lady at a textile facility. She was brand new and there was a sign on the wall that said, "If you get your thread tangled, call the foreman to assist." Her thread got tangled but she didn't want to bother the foreman out of embarrassment and independence. The thread got worse, and she had no choice but to call the foreman. She said, "I did my very best to try and fix the problem, I am sorry." The foreman said, "No you didn't do your best. If you did your best, you would have called me over and let me do my job so that I could help you succeed." Don't we do that with God all the time?

For humans, we start off absolutely dependent on our parents when we are babies and small children. As we grow, we should become less and less dependent on our parents. That is healthy. However, in the Kingdom of God and as children of God, as we grow and mature, we should work at becoming more and more *dependent* on God.

The question I want to leave with you this morning is this: How do we live dependent on God? How do we trust in the middle of delay. My answer is simple...get a bigger view of the goodness and power of God. Notice that in about a week's time two people were raised from the dead in this region...Lazarus and Jesus. There was something different about Jesus though. You see when Lazarus was raised from the dead, he came out and was still bound in the grave clothes. Jesus had to command people in the crowd to go and unbind him. That is another sermon about the power of community. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He left the grave clothes behind...folded. Jesus was not resurrected back into His earthly body but a physical heavenly body. Jesus didn't go through death and come out alive...Jesus destroy death. We serve a God who defeated death. We serve a God that has proven nothing is impossible. So while we wait on earth to one day be in our heavenly body, we need to trust God in the delay. God is more interested in what you do in the delay than in the answer to the delay. Why? Because answers are simple to God...but the process in the middle of the delay is difficult. God wants to do something in you before He does something for you.

