

TEXT: Psalm 130

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About that sermon title. Three dots. Officially known as an ellipsis. It comes from the Greek meaning “omission” or “falling short”. Grammatically, it’s used to take the place of words, without sacrificing meaning. It indicates the missing in between, bridging the beginning words and ending words of, say, a long quote. But its use has expanded and evolved. According to the Urban Dictionary, the triple dot is used in email and texting as a space filler during an awkward silence, or as a visible sign that one is waiting for an answer. I was waiting on an answer, alright – to the question “What do I call this sermon?”. I guess I am still waiting... dot dot dot....

I could have used an hourglass, or a spinning circle. Or lower tech versions – a tear off piece of paper with a number on it, or some piped in muzak. Things we see, things we hear, things we hold on to while we are waiting.

If you think about it, we wait far less than we used to. Whether it is communication (do you carry on conversations via snail mail), or food preparation (we’ve gone from growing it to zapping it in the microwave), learning or finding answers to anything (hello Google), we have decreased our waiting time for much in life. So isn’t it ironic that we seem, in our day and culture, to be all the more impatient for having done so? We have set ourselves up to expect

that everything should happen now, when we want it, as we want it, just a point and click away.

But the truth is, that like it or not, life is still a waiting game. Life is full of dot dot dots.

You know this. You know about waiting on decisions, that are both in and out of your hands. Job applications, college applications, loan or grant applications. You know about waiting on test results, waiting for treatments to work. You know about waiting for lives to change, for relationships to heal, for kids to get their act together. You know about waiting for something to happen, or for something to stop happening. You know about waiting for things to be made right, and for things to be more just. You know about waiting for pain to stop, waiting for answers to prayer, waiting to see what God wants from you or wills for this church. It is a dot dot dot kind of life.

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord

more than watchmen wait for the morning,

more than watchmen wait for the morning.

The life of waiting is nothing new. And the life of waiting faithfully – waiting for the Lord- is our calling. Being faithful doesn't remove the dot dot dot of life – but it does give us two things. One, waiting faithfully gives us the promise of God's will on the other side of the dots. And two, it gives us the strength to hold on when life feels like we are being put on hold.

Here's something to hold on to. In the Hebrew, there are several words that can be translated "wait". But the one here in this verse of Psalm 130 "wait for the Lord" is kavah. It is also translated trust or hope. Waiting and hoping – same word, the two sides of the same coin. Hope allows us to wait. We wait because we hope. But it gets better, at least for word nerds

like me. That Hebrew word kavah originally meant “twist” or “weave” and spoke of the twisting and wrapping of strands of rope, making it stronger, so it can then hold a heavy load for a long time. Which is, of course, what waiting feels like, right?

Don’t let people tell you otherwise. Don’t believe it when you hear “I’m just waiting. I’m not doing anything”. Waiting is hard work. It takes a lot of energy. Energy to keep going, when it can be tempting to give up. And energy to restrain ourselves when it can be tempting to preempt the wait. Elisabeth Elliot reminds us that “Waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one’s thought.” Bearing, carrying, lifting. We need the strength of a many stranded rope – especially when we feel like we are at the end of our own.

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Watchmen on guard on the city walls throughout the night, that time when things are dark and vulnerable. No one was more eager to see dawn’s first light, and to know that he and his people had gotten through the night safely. But not even the best watchman could make the dawn come any sooner. He just had to wait and watch – dot dot dot – until the sky brightened. We who wait – even we who wait faithfully – cannot rush the dawn. But the dawn can’t be stopped, either. And it is that assurance that gives us hope in the days of dot dot dot darkness. Because we know who holds tomorrow.

You've heard the saying I am sure – “when God closes one door, God opens another” – or maybe even a window. I don't know – based on the reading and the feeling of Psalm 130 and so many more who voice their waiting on the Lord, I think we need to edit that saying a bit. Even just the punctuation. When God closes one door, God opens another – even with the comma, it sounds like it happens right away. I think it calls for a couple of dots – let's make it three. When God closes one door...God opens another. And there in the dot dot dot place between doors is where many of us spend a good bit of time --- in other words, in the hallway. The hallway – the place of waiting and wondering and praying and hoping. The place of another inspired and inspiring saying – “Until God opens the next door, praise him in the hallway”. Don't go off into the room of denial, where you ignore the hard work and pain of waiting on God. Don't go off into the room of doubt, where you stop believing that God opens doors. Don't go off into the room of despair, where you stop hoping in that word “until” and the dawn-like assurance it brings. “Until God opens the next door, praise him in the hallway”. Have hope in the hallway. Be strengthened in the many stranded rope that holds you while you wait. Remember who holds tomorrow, and who holds you.

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Until the dawn, until the door opens, wait on God, and know that, as you do, God holds you in the darkness, in the hallway, in the dot dot dot of life.