

SLIDE 1.) THE WAITING ROOM: PURPOSE IN THE PAUSE

Isaiah 40:27–31

“Waiting for Hope.”

When you step back, all of life is a waiting room. We are always waiting, we are “stuck in the middle’ between birth and eternity. Waiting is exhausting, and in situations where we are waiting for something bad, something inevitable, we can lose hope, we can grow spiritually weary and spiritually faint, and if you have had a season of waiting like that, you know the exact feeling I am talking about.

Introduction

Today, as we begin our new Christmas series, "The Waiting Room: Purpose in the Pause," we turn to the book of Isaiah. Advent reminds us that waiting isn't wasted or hopeless—it is often where God does His deepest work. In this first sermon, we'll learn from Isaiah how to have hope in life's waiting room. True hope is not wishful thinking, but confident trust in the God who keeps His promises and renews our strength as we wait. We'll see this lesson unfold through the story of the kingdom of Israel, who also found themselves in the waiting room.

Kingdom of Israel

If anyone knew this feeling of waiting, it would have been the kingdom of Israel. Now, this portion of scripture, it is very important that we understand the context because context really matters when we look at chapter 40. So, during the time of the prophet Isiah in the Old Testament, this is post-Egypt captivity, “let my people go,” Moses and all of that. The Kingdom of Israel has been divided, They had just been delivered from the Assyrian threat, (they were captives as judgment for their sin against God) and they are finally delivered and in Isaiah Chapter 39 they do not have much time to celebrate because a new prophecy from God reveals

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that the Kingdom of Israel will be taken captive by the Babylonian empire (also because of Israel's sin), This prophecy is fulfilled in 586 B.C under King Nebuchadnezzar Juda the southern kingdom of Israel is conquered.

Hope in advance.

So here is where things get interesting: Isaiah's prophecy happened over 100 years before the Kingdom of Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity. And in chapter 40, we see encouragement from God, comfort, and hope in the waiting. It was written in advance for people who were going to feel forgotten, exhausted, and hopeless (which shows that God provides hope before life's trials). It will be read to people who are already in hopeless captivity. And rightfully so, this is a people who are losing everything, literally the prophecy in

(SLIDE 3) Isaiah 39:6 says this “Look, the days are coming when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until today, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left,” says the Lord.” Says the Lord, signed, sealed, delivered, and so Israel has doubts and questions, and of course they do, so what we see in Isaiah Chapter 40 is the answers to these questions, questions that we also have in life’s waiting room when we feel hopeless. Questions we ask God when we or a loved one is sick, when a relationship is not working out, when life just did not seem to go as planned.

(SLIDE 4) Questions we ask in the waiting room.

Here are some of the questions Israel will ask that are addressed in Isaiah chapter 40.

1. Does God have the power? (Is he even able? I see the Babylonians worshipping their gods, and they defeated and conquered us, so is their god greater?) Have you ever seen a situation of a loved one you have been praying for, and you get to a point where you feel like "they are too far gone, it's hopeless"? A similar question we ask subconsciously, doubting God's power.

2. Does God want to deliver us? (Is he even aware of us and who we are? Does he know me? Because in this season of waiting, I feel forgotten, this season has gone on for years.”

3. Will God, do it? - Will he answer my prayer, will he heal, will he move?

So, in the hopelessness of the waiting room, under captivity, no end in sight, the Kingdom of Israel asks this question....

(SLIDE 5) Does God Have The Power?

God answers this question powerfully, and I can try to come up with the right words to use to describe God's power, but He does a better job than I do. Listen to Isaiah 40:12-15 and follow along with God's response to those in the waiting room who are lacking hope because of doubt in God's power.

(SLIDE 6) Isaiah 40:12-15

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
or marked off the heavens with the span of his hand?

Who has gathered the dust of the earth in a measure
or weighed the mountains on a balance
and the hills on the scales? 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord,
or who gave him counsel?

14 Who did he consult?

(SLIDE 7) Who gave him understanding
and taught him the paths of justice?

Who taught him knowledge
and showed him the way of understanding? 15 Look, the nations are like a drop in a bucket;
they are considered as a speck of dust on the scales;
he lifts up the islands like fine dust.

(SLIDE 8) Isaiah 40:21–26

21 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told to you from the beginning?

Have you not understood the foundations of the earth? (have you forgotten God's power and think these fake gods are greater? You think this situation is higher than God?)

22 God is enthroned above the circle of the earth;
its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like thin cloth
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

(SLIDE 9) 23 He reduces princes to nothing
and makes judges of the earth like a wasteland.

24 They are barely planted, barely sown,
their stem barely takes root in the ground

when he blows on them, and they wither,
and a whirlwind carries them away like stubble.

(SLIDE 10)25 “To whom will you compare me,

or who is my equal?” asks the Holy One. (Don’t compare me to false gods or someone dire situation)

26 Look up and see!

Who created these?

He brings out the stars by number;

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he calls all of them by name. (he knows the stars names, countless)

Because of his great power and strength,

not one of them is missing.

So why did God spend all that time revealing his power? Because we often forget when we are in the waiting room of life. Waiting causes us to doubt God. When there is no instant gratification, we fill in the silence with doubts. A child, when a parent says, “I will be right back,” and if they are ten minutes late, you assume the worst. God is never late; He is never held back because of a lack of power.

So, God clearly is powerful and deep down we know that, but that leads to the second question we ask in life's waiting room.

(SLIDE 11) Does God want to deliver us?

(is he even aware of us and who we are, does he know me?, because in this season of waiting I feel forgotten, this season has gone on for years.) The irony of asking that question “does god know I exist, am I even on his radar reveals that we do not know God, not that he does not know us.)

(SLIDE 12) Isaiah 40:27 Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you assert, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my claim is ignored by my God”?

The kingdom of Israel is exiled, national identity is gone, they feel abandoned, and they feel forgotten. We have all been there before: “Why is God ignoring me, or why do I feel forgotten, why are my prayers ignored?” This is where a lack of hope leads to spiritual exhaustion, stumbling, and we faint. Weary, anxious striving, “there is no help, help is not on the way, so that

must mean it is all on me.” We let go of God’s comfort and cling to earthly comfort (our own strength)

(SLIDE 13) His timing not ours, his promises not our effort, and thank goodness for that.

If every prayer you had was answered according to your timing, you would be miserable, and I am confident to say that, because if every prayer I had was answered and answered right away, I would be so far away from God's will. His promises, not our striving or worrying in the waiting, the anxiety and worry do not speed up anything; overthinking does not solve the issue.

So, this assumption...

(SLIDE 14) Isaiah 40:27 Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you assert, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my claim is ignored by my God”?

It is false. He knows the stars by name, He knows you, He sees you.

We also see that He uses their name, which is a big deal because they feel forgotten.

Isaiah 40:27 Jacob, and Israel. And they know exactly what using Jacob and Israel as their names means, because that is the name used in the promise that God had for his people, which he reiterates throughout time.

Exodus 6:7 I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from Egypt.

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He is saying, you may assume I have forgotten you, and you certainly have forgotten me, but I know you by name, and He says the same thing to us in the anxious seasons of waiting. Our feelings (I feel abandoned, forgotten, just like Israel here). Our feelings do not change God’s eternal promises. And that gives us hope in the waiting.

(SLIDE 15) Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding.

God's promises do not fade even when we do.

And this same God gives you strength when you feel forgotten in the waiting.

And we get to this well-known portion of scripture in (SLIDE 16) Isaiah 40:29-31

29 He gives strength to the faint

and strengthens the powerless.

30 Youths may become faint and weary,
and young men stumble and fall,
(SLIDE 17)31 but those who trust in the Lord
will renew their strength;
they will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not become weary,
they will walk and not faint.

(SLIDE 18) Will God deliver us?

Well, this is obvious, right? He will, we will soar and run and walk! This is the tension point for us today, this is where the temptation is to preach a feel-good sermon and end there and avoid this next part. This is the hardest question to answer in pastoral conversations when I talk to college students or young adults. "Will God answer this prayer, will he heal, will he move?" This is the hardest part in life when you are in the waiting room. He will answer your prayer, he will heal, he will move, but according to his will, not yours. And this is where context matters, remember the context, this verse is written to Israel while they were conquered by Babylon. So, their waiting and hoping that they would not be conquered or destroyed was answered by being conquered, or their hope that they would be saved in their lifetime, when so many lives were already taken. And so, the tension arises: What is (SLIDE 19) Isaiah 40:31 talking about?

31 but those who trust in the Lord
will renew their strength;
they will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not become weary,
they will walk and not faint.

They will soar like eagles and run and not be weary or faint. How they lost, in most of their lifetimes, it is over from an earthly perspective, because think of their individual prayers, "bring

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back my son from captivity, do not let this family member die at the hands of Babylon, let us be delivered this week? Because this crucial principle is forgotten or overlooked, but if we remember it can change everything while we wait. It is this (SLIDE 21) Eternal hope conquers earthly trials. In other words, a mark of true spiritual maturity is the ability to realize that God's eternal promise and hope surpasses the current earthly trials you are going through. And this

portion of scripture says that God will provide this supernatural spiritual strength that is available, despite Israel being conquered, despite whatever trial you face today. Why is that? “Why can they hope in captivity? Because God is not just promising strength...He is promising a Savior.” It is the gospel, the good news. Isaiah is saying, Israel, you can soar and run and not be faint because a savior is on the move, you may be conquered here, but I have something far greater than earthly deliverance, and it is mentioned at the very start of this chapter, Comfort in verse 1, and then the prophecy in verse 3. See if this sounds familiar.

(SLIDE 21) (Isaiah 40:3-5) A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

4 Every valley will be lifted up,

and every mountain and hill will be leveled;

the uneven ground will become smooth and the rough places, a plain.

5 And the glory of the Lord will appear,

and all humanity together will see it,

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

John the Baptist, making way for the King, the Savior. Yes, Israel you are conquered but this eternal hope for eternity conquers this earthly trial and there is something far greater than earthly temporary fleeting hope and freedom for your people because the savior is on the move and one day it will be said on this day “for all people” a savior is born, and it is not bound to this earth but to forever. And he will not break earthly bondage and captivity, but the bondage of sin and those captives he will set free, and the gates of hell will not stand against; he will conquer death itself on our behalf. That is hope!

(SLIDE 22) Don't miss Jesus in the waiting room, do not confuse earthly hope with the eternal promise. (hope)

Perhaps you need to shift your perspective of hope, perhaps you have been exhausted in the waiting room of life because you are clinging on to an earthly hope, healing, answered prayer for the temporary situational change, when you should be putting your hope in the savior, for behold I give you tidings of great joy which will be for all people for on this day in the city of David, a savior is born who is Christ the King.

And when you do this, what you will find is the ultimate sign of sanctification, of hope in the waiting room, it is this, that (SLIDE 23) your situation may not change but you will. When you shift where you place your hope, then you will.

(SLIDE 24) Isaiah 40:31

31 but those who trust in the Lord (not earthly changes, not strength from you)
will renew their strength.

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they will soar on wings like eagles.

they will run and not become weary,

they will walk and not faint.

Results of waiting:

1. “Mount up with wings like eagles” — God lifts you ABOVE earthly trials, so although you are in the waiting room, you will have supernatural hope because of a promised tomorrow.

2. “Run and not grow weary” — supernatural enabling, you can run the good race.

3. “Walk and not faint” — endurance for the long haul, be a good and faithful servant.

Notice the order because it seems strange. First, we mount up with wings like eagles. Then we ran. Finally, we walk. Does it seem out of order? Not at all. First, we recognize that we soar up into heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). Then we set ourselves on the course to run the race (Hebrews 12:1). Then we are in a good place to walk (Colossians 2:6) to endure.

Eternal hope allows us to “Keep putting on fresh strength.”

God doesn’t give us a lifetime of strength at once.

He gives us grace for today, using the eternal hope for tomorrow, so then.

Neither my might nor strength fades (situation may not change, but you will, but not because of your anxious striving, but because your hope is reestablished in the one who has your future promise sealed, and He has the strength to back it up.”

So, let’s be practical,

What waiting on the Lord is NOT:

- Not passive
- Not doing nothing
- Not giving up
- Not “manifesting positivity” or just letting go.

What waiting IS:

- Relying on His timing
- Trusting His promises over your feelings
- Seeking Him instead of striving
- Resting in His strength, not yours
- Eternal Hope of the gospel. Cultivating the unwavering hope in you

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So, where in your life do you need to let go of anxious striving, and instead place your hope in the one who has the power, knows your name, and has already delivered you? As we pray to the Lord, if you are in the waiting room of life during this Advent season, you have a hope for the future, and there is purpose in the pause.