

## SERMON

Lamentations 3:22-33

Wait for the Lord's Salvation

Nunawading and Waverley, 27-6-21

Dear friends in Christ,

I have been in a few situations where I have had to wait for an ambulance to arrive. It is the indefinite nature of the arrival of emergency assistance that makes waiting so difficult. Imagine those waiting for an insurance assessment on a storm damaged house or waiting for assistance when the power has been cut off for a week or more! The Spirit speaks to us about waiting: **It is good that a person be strong and remain in silence; to wait for Yahweh's salvation.** Our theme is, wait for the Lord's Salvation but how good are we at waiting for our Father's emergency assistance?

A doctor's or dentist's waiting room is not the sort of thing in mind here. The magazines are not interesting; you read the posters, then what? God does not have in mind a listless, boring activity of waiting for him. If you want a child to get through a difficult phase and mature, you do not sit idly by doing nothing. You will be praying for the Lord's saving help but in the mean time you read pertinent literature, join a support group, and obtain some professional help. I want to see our church grow and the Holy Spirit create a fire of love, commitment and mission amongst us. While I wait for the Lord, I preach, teach and encourage all of us to consider our mission: to integrate new people and the younger generation and to reach out to our contacts with the gospel. Our vision is to be a multicultural church that reflects the demographic we live in. We cannot be passive waiters but active waiters on the Lord.

It is not as though the Holy Spirit has gone on strike while we wait for him. Listen to what he says: **Because of the steadfast love of Yahweh we are not finished, for his acts of kindness are not at an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.** God's kindness leads to a multiplicity of loving acts. Every morning is a fresh day of promise, of experiencing the Lord's support even if the big problem is not yet solved. Israel was in exile in Babylon. Their country was destroyed by invading armies and all was in ruins. You

couldn't think of a worse situation. Normally we do not expect a flame to shine brighter when poisonous gases fill the room or health to bloom in a contagious diseases ward, but that is what happens with the Lord. In fact, when things get worse, when people fail, everything seems to be in decay and relationships are breaking down, the Lord's faithful love grows stronger for us.

Most people looking at a dying church think, just close it down. I do not think that that is waiting on the Lord's salvation at all. A Uniting Church minister (not George) was telling me he knew of a congregation with seven elderly women. They were on the precipice but rather than shut the door they prayed. They prayed for renewal, for new members and for obedience to the Lord's call into mission. A few weeks later, a young family appeared. They shared their vision of a renewed church and said that in submission to their Saviour, they would give up their hold on the congregation and step aside from leadership. Their role would be to pray and to serve any new comers. The congregation grew and became a thriving church.

Waiting for the Lord's salvation assumes we are actually seeking it for the Spirit declares: **Yahweh is good to the one who waits on him, for the person who will seek him.**

Human beings are unique in that they are ever reaching forward and seeking for what they think is good (cows do not think that there must be a better paddock across the ocean). You see, **only God is good** as Jesus tells us. Of course, he is morally good. Rather, the Lord is the highest thing to attain. To know him is to know exhilarating joy and a love that has no end.

However, while we wait, we may have to endure pain. God has given his Son for each of us and therefore, his compassion for our situation can never be doubted even when we suffer. **For if he causes grief, he will have compassion. His loving kindness is overflowing.**

The word for compassion comes from the word for womb. God's love for us through his Son is a love that comes from deep inside him. Imagine giving your son away for this world! The Lord has a womb-feeling for you and for his church. We should expect a good outcome in the end. For Israel, waiting for the Lord's salvation meant accepting a just punishment. Israel, both North and South, had made alliances with foreign nations and accepted their gods. No longer were there any checks on the abuse of power and the rich exploited the poor. They lost the spiritual vision of God's kingdom so that disaster was inevitable. Waiting for the Lord has to exclude rebellion against the Lord. That is why we hear in the word these sentences: **Let him sit in isolation and be silent for [Yahweh] has laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in dust for [Yahweh] has lifted this upon him.'**

**Let him offer his cheek to the one who strikes him; let him accept taunting as his lot.**

He took our punishment and endured the suffering human rebellion caused. Some deep troubles come from our behaviour but many do not. Whatever the case, we endure in hope knowing that our patience will be rewarded. Christ gave his cheeks to those who slapped him and insulted him. We believe in a Lord who does not want to see **his children suffer**. Wait in trust, wait seeking, wait in obedience, wait for the Lord's salvation.