

PULPIT PREACHING OUTLINE

Waiting Was Not Doing Nothing

Acts 1:12-14

TWBC PULPIT PREACHING OUTLINE: Waiting Was Not Doing Nothing

INTRODUCTION

- There are times when God tells us to wait.
- When we hear “wait,” we can get the idea that nothing is happening.
 - “I cannot do anything yet.”
 - “I am just waiting.”
- But Acts 1 shows us something different.
- Jesus had risen from the dead.
- He had spent time with His disciples.
- He had given them instructions.
- He had told them what was coming.
- Before Acts 1:12-14, notice exactly what Jesus told them.

[PPT → Acts 1:4-5]

Acts 1:4-5

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but **wait** for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. **5** For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

- **[QUESTION]** They were told to wait. But what did that waiting look like?
- **[QUESTION]** Did they sit around doing absolutely nothing until the next thing happened?
- No.
- Acts 1:12-14 tells us what they did while they waited.
- **[STRONG]** They did not run ahead of Jesus, but they did not become spiritually idle either.
- They kept doing what Christ had already made clear.
- They waited for what only God could do.

I. THEY RETURNED IN OBEDIENCE — ACTS 1:12

[PPT → Acts 1:12]

Acts 1:12

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

- Notice the first word: “Then.”

- Jesus has ascended.
- The disciples have been standing there looking toward heaven.
- They have been reminded that Jesus will come again.
- Then they return to Jerusalem.
- At first, this can look like nothing more than a travel detail.
- But remember what Jesus had already told them:
 - Do not depart from Jerusalem.
 - Wait there for the promise.
- So when verse 12 says, “Then returned they unto Jerusalem,” they are going back where Christ told them to be.
- **[STRONG] The first thing we see about their waiting is that they obeyed what they already knew to do.**
- Sometimes we become so focused on what we are waiting for that we neglect what God has already made clear.
 - We want an answer about tomorrow.
 - We neglect what we already know today.
 - We want to know what comes next.
 - But God has already plainly told us things to do right now.
- These disciples had a great work ahead of them.
- Jesus had already spoken about their future witness in Acts 1:8.
- But they were not supposed to run out immediately and try to force the next stage.
- Their responsibility right then was simple:
 - Return to Jerusalem.
 - Wait.
- **[WARNING]** Waiting faithfully does not mean trying to make God's next step happen on our schedule.
- There is such a thing as running ahead.
- There is such a thing as trying to force what God has not yet brought to pass.
- But there is another danger.
- We can use waiting as an excuse for neglect.
- The disciples did neither one.
- They could not bring the promise of the Father themselves.
- They could not make Pentecost happen.
- But they could return to Jerusalem because Christ had told them where to be.
- **[STRONG] Waiting on God does not cancel faithfulness to what God has already told us to do.**
- There are places in Scripture where God's people are told to stand still.
- There are times when faith means refusing to take matters into your own hands.
- So the lesson is not:
 - “Always stay busy.”
- The lesson is:

- **[REPEAT] “Stay obedient.”**

- There is a big difference between staying busy and staying obedient.
- The disciples were not searching for random things to keep themselves occupied.
- They were doing what Jesus had already told them to do.
- While they waited for what only God could accomplish, they remained responsible for what Christ had already made clear.

II. THEY REMAINED TOGETHER — ACTS 1:13

[PPT → Acts 1:13]

Acts 1:13

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

- They returned to Jerusalem.
- Then they gathered together.
- Luke could have simply said, “the disciples were there.”
- Instead, he names them.
 - Peter is there.
 - James is there.
 - John is there.
 - Andrew is there.
 - Philip is there.
 - Thomas is there.
 - Bartholomew is there.
 - Matthew is there.
 - The others are there.
- These are real men with different backgrounds and different histories.
- Some had been bold.
- Some had failed badly.
- Thomas had struggled with doubt.
- Peter had denied the Lord.
- But now look at them:
 - **[STRONG] They are together.**
- The point is not that there was something magical about an upper room.
- The Bible does not say the room had special power.
- The point is the people who were gathered there.
- **[REPEAT] They were waiting, but they had not scattered.**
- That is easy to miss.
- Something major had changed.
- They had just watched Jesus ascend into heaven.
- They knew something was coming.

- But it had not happened yet.
- **[QUESTION]** What did they do?
- They stayed together.
- This matters because verse 14 does not describe one man praying alone somewhere.
- It says, “These all continued.”
- Their waiting was shared.
- Acts continues to show this kind of togetherness.
- When we reach Acts 2, the believers are still together.
- Later, when opposition comes, they gather and pray together again.
- Circumstances change.
- They do not abandon one another.
- **[ENCOURAGE]** That matters for a church.
- There are seasons when we know exactly what is happening.
- There are seasons when we do not.
- Sometimes answers come quickly.
- Sometimes they do not.
- But uncertainty is not a good reason to pull away from God's people.
- These disciples stayed where Christ told them to stay.
- And they stayed together.
- Verse 13 also keeps us from turning the entire sermon into nothing but a message about prayer.
- Prayer is coming in verse 14.
- Prayer is a major emphasis.
- But before Luke tells us what they were doing together, he shows us that they were together.
- **[STRONG]** The waiting did not scatter them.

III. THEY CONTINUED IN PRAYER — ACTS 1:14

[PPT → Acts 1:14]

Acts 1:14

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

- Now we come to the strongest statement in the passage about what they did while they waited.
- **[SLOW]** “These all continued.”
- They did not pray once and quit.
- They continued.
- They continued “with one accord.”
- The verse does not say they agreed about every possible subject anyone could ever discuss.
- We should not force the phrase to say more than it says.
- But it clearly shows that they were united in what they were doing.
- **[QUESTION]** And what were they doing?
- They continued “in prayer and supplication.”

- **[STRONG] Prayer was not doing nothing.**
- Sometimes we talk as though prayer is what we do when nothing else is left.
 - “Well, I guess all we can do now is pray.”
- But that is not the picture we see in Acts.
- Prayer was not a substitute for real ministry.
- Prayer continued when ministry became very active.

[PPT → Acts 2:42]

Acts 2:42

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

- Notice that word again:
 - “continued.”
- Before Pentecost:
 - Acts 1 says they continued in prayer.
- After Pentecost:
 - Acts 2 says they continued stedfastly.
 - Prayer is still there.
- So prayer was not something they did only because they were waiting.
- Later, opposition came against the believers.
- Acts 4 records them lifting up their voice to God with one accord.
- Their prayer life did not disappear when preaching began.
- Their prayer life did not disappear when persecution came.
- Their prayer life did not disappear when public ministry became active.
- Then Acts 6 shows the apostles still emphasizing prayer.

[PPT → Acts 6:4]

Acts 6:4

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

- **[QUESTION]** Do you see that?
- Prayer and ministry are not enemies.
- Prayer is not inactivity while ministry is activity.
- The apostles gave themselves:
 - continually to prayer,
 - and to the ministry of the word.
- That helps us understand Acts 1:14.
- The disciples were waiting.
- But they were not spiritually idle.
- They were praying.
- **[WARNING]** We also need to be careful about what we claim their prayer accomplished.

- Acts 1 does not say:
 - They prayed enough and finally convinced God to send the promise.
 - They reached a certain level of unity and then God became willing to act.
- Jesus had already given the promise before this prayer meeting happened.
- **[STRONG] They were not praying to force God's hand. They were praying while trusting what Christ had already said.**
- That is a very different thing.
- Sometimes while waiting, we become obsessed with making the answer happen.
- We think:
 - If I say the right words...
 - If I do enough...
 - If I work hard enough...
 - If I become spiritual enough...
 - Maybe I can make God move according to my schedule.
- That is not what happened here.
- **[REPEAT] They prayed, but they left the fulfillment with God.**
- They obeyed, but they left the fulfillment with God.
- They stayed together, but they left the fulfillment with God.
- **[STRONG] That is faithful waiting.**
- Verse 14 also tells us who else was there:
 - the women,
 - Mary the mother of Jesus,
 - and His brethren.
- The praying company was broader than the eleven apostles.
- They were gathered together.
- Together they continued in prayer and supplication.
- Mary is there praying with them.
- She is not being prayed to.
- She is one of the people gathered with the others in prayer.
- Christ's brethren are there as well.
- The passage does not explain their whole history here.
- It simply tells us they are present with the praying company.
- And what binds the whole verse together?
- **[SLOW] "These all continued."**
- **[REPEAT] They continued.**

CONCLUSION

- The disciples were told to wait.
- And they waited.
- **[STRONG] But waiting was not doing nothing.**
- Verse 12:

- They returned.
- They obeyed what Christ had already told them to do.
- Verse 13:
 - They gathered.
 - They abode together.
 - They did not scatter while they waited.
- Verse 14:
 - They continued.
 - They were with one accord.
 - They prayed.
 - They made supplication.
- This gives us the balance we need.
- **[WARNING]** Do not run ahead of God.
- These disciples did not.
- There were things coming that they could not produce themselves.
- They had to wait for what Christ had promised.
- But do not use waiting as an excuse to stop being faithful either.
- **[ENCOURAGE]** If God has already made something clear, keep obeying it.
- If you are waiting for an answer in one area, do not stop doing what Scripture already says in every other area.
- Keep praying.
- Keep gathering with God's people.
- Keep doing what you already know is right.
- **[STRONG] And remember this: prayer is not doing nothing.**
- The disciples could not control when the promised event would happen.
- They could not manufacture what only God could do.
- But:
 - They could obey.
 - They could stay together.
 - They could pray.
- That is what they did.
- **[ENCOURAGE]** When you are in a season of waiting, do not think faithfulness has to stop until the answer comes.
- Do what God has already made clear.
- Trust Him with what only He can do.
- **[SLOW] [REPEAT] Waiting was not doing nothing.**