

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

Waiting can be both, exciting and exhausting! We know a young lady waiting to give birth to her second child, and we know a grandparent waiting to see her grand daughter this summer; there was a time when some of us were waiting for our children to “grow up” and allow us to pick up where we left off when they arrived (*seriously, we would love to have ours back any day!*). Everyone is waiting for someone or something, be it in a queue for the bus or train, waiting for results (medical or academic); we spend our lives waiting, and the wait can be as exciting, as it can be exhausting!

Visiting a church one Sunday, a lady noticed the sermon seemed to go on forever. Waiting for it to end, she nodded off, temporarily. After the service ended, the lady turned around and saw an elderly gentleman waking up from his mid-morning Sunday nap. She extended her hand in greeting, and said, “Hello, ***I'm Gladys Dunn.***” The gentleman raised his bleary eyes and replied, “*You're not the only one ma'am. I was waiting long enough and I too am glad it's done!*”

We shall spend two months in the book of Acts, which is Luke's sequel to the Gospel account of the Life of Christ. You may recognise these three names, but if George Lucas, Gary Kurtz and Irvin Kirshner authored the book of Acts and directed the film, we would have the title, “*The Return of the Christ - The Holy Spirit Strikes Back*”! Take away the mask of King James' language, this is what we have!

The Disciples spent three years with Jesus during which their world was transformed into a new way of life. Their lives were then turned upside down with the horrible death of their leader, for whom they had given up everything and followed Him, believing Him to be the Messiah to deliver Israel from bondage to foreign powers. Then, while

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

they were in hiding, wondering what would happen next, Jesus' resurrection shook them out of feeling sorry for themselves. This was followed by 40 days in Jesus' company, listening, learning, absorbing, questioning this revolutionary idea He proposed, *The Kingdom of God is here and now!* At the end of it, they still hadn't captured Jesus' vision and their only concern was, *Lord! Will you at this time, free Israel from Rome and restore God's Kingdom to Israel?*

Jesus rebuked them, *Don't ask! It is not for you to know, times or seasons the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will be given power when God releases the Holy Spirit, to complete His work. You will be empowered and tasked to be my witness, of all I said and have done, all over this land (Judea and Samaria), and to the ends of the earth.*¹ What a powerful commission to be given! Jesus did not say to them, *Learn theology before you speak*, He did not ask them to memorise Scripture verses to rattle off, He did not expect them to learn a special language or words to speak, all He said was, *be witnesses of all I have said and done in your life! If my teaching, my way of life has impacted you for the better, tell others about what I have done for you.* The interesting thing is, we are happy to visit a new restaurant and experience the cuisine, then tell everyone about it; we are happy to buy something which make us look and feel better, and then tell everyone about it, but we are shy to tell family and friends about our experience of our relation with Jesus the Christ.

Before His ascension, Jesus' final directive was, *Go to Jerusalem and **wait** there for the promise of the Father, which, He said, you heard*

¹ Acts 1:6-8

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

from me; John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit, not many days from now.²

The first thing we notice is that Jesus does not define the day and time. *It is not for you to know times or seasons the Father has fixed by His own authority*, but He asks us to wait.

The second thing we notice in Jesus' directive to the disciples, is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied passages in the entire Bible: baptism by water and baptism by the Holy Spirit. We will spend time in a few weeks examining *baptism*, but to put it into context for now, the crystal clear waters have sadly been muddied by church denominations who make much of the event of Baptism, and make it serve their purpose. Baptism is seen as a form of registration, an official imprimatur of belonging in the church denomination. This registration becomes a *Licence*, without which a child cannot enter a faith school and cannot receive Holy Communion, nor can a person can neither be married nor buried by the Church. There are denominations of Church, who see themselves as the exclusive purveyor of ***hatch - match - and dispatch*** services. This is at one extreme; at the other extreme are denominations who dismiss or downplay baptism by water, and emphasise "Spirit Baptism", manifest by speaking in tongues. Add to this, the unnecessary talk, which baptism is better, immersion or sprinkling, soaking or dry-cleaning.

When Jesus speaks, He speaks with the authority of God and validates it through His own experience. Jesus was baptised in water by John the Baptist, and Matthew tells us, *When Jesus was baptised (by cousin John), as He came up out of the water, everyone present*

² Acts 1:4-5

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

*saw Heaven open up and the Spirit of God descend as a dove and rest on Him; and a voice from Heaven was heard saying, **This is my Son in whom I am well-pleased.***

For those who hold the imprimatur view of Baptism, could well say, *Jesus did not have a Certificate of Baptism, which is why he apprenticed as a carpenter with his father Joseph, as he could not go to school; Jesus did not get married because He did not have a Certificate of Baptism and he could not be properly buried because He did not have this all-important certificate. One could make this case, but how wrong we would be!*

Baptism is certainly a privilege, but it does not bestow privileges on us, and it does not make *The Baptised*, a privileged class. To clear the air briefly this morning, let me summarise the distinction:

- **baptism by water** is the surrender of our **life**, not to God, but to the life of God in us; *I will not live my own life, but let God live His life in and through me.*
- **baptism by the Holy Spirit** is the surrender of our **will**, not to God, but to the will of God acting through me; *I won't exercise my personal will, but I will let God's will/plan be accomplished in and through me.*

Both baptisms are about surrender. Jesus surrenders to John asking to be baptised with water; Jesus surrenders His life to fulfil God's saving activity which takes Him to the cross, the message through the native of the Old Testament.

Jesus surrenders His will to His Father's will, when the Holy Spirit leads Him into the wilderness for 40 days, to prepare Him to meet the

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

one who claims to be king of this world - satan himself. When satan arrives to provoke Jesus, hoping he would slip up and do or say something against God, by that time, through fasting and prayer, Jesus is absolutely focussed on and surrendered to the will of God and is able to fend off each of satan's three taunts misquoting the Word of God, with the words - *it is written ... it is written... it is written ...*³. *You don't know the word of God so you misquote Him, but this its what it says, it is written ... it is written... it is written ...*

Jesus' 40 day preparation before being released for ministry into this world, is no different than the disciples' 40 days spent with Jesus, preparing to be released into their world, being prepared for God's ministry in this world.

Waiting is a time of preparation. In our fast-paced world where time-is-money, where opportunities present themselves once, so take it as it comes otherwise it won't come again, where everything must be done today, even if its not the proper way of doing it, we have lost the importance of **preparation** and we have become impatient. Waiting is no longer seen as an investment which will yield results, waiting is seen as a waste of time.

So, waiting is first about preparing ourselves, learning the **how?** and the **what?**, even the **why?** when it is appropriate, of doing things.

This *waiting* is learning to **surrender our life to have God's life in us**. Our learning amounts to nothing unless we allow God to live His life in and through us, to give meaning to our life.

³ Matthew 3:13 - 4:10

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

Jesus then introduces His disciples to another kind of waiting, *return to Jerusalem and wait ... in a few days ...* This is the most difficult kind of waiting, but unless we understand and appreciate this, we cannot be **surrendered to God's will**, His plan working through us.

We wait, not knowing for what we wait! We wait for God to move and act in His perfect time, the time **HE** knows is right.

So it was with the disciples who were witnesses of all Jesus said and did. They saw Him die; they walked and talked with Him after His resurrection, and they watched as He returned to Heaven.

In obedience, the disciples act on *both* Jesus' instructions: return to Jerusalem, and wait. All 11 of them, and several women among whom was Mary the mother of Jesus and his four brothers (**note:** John did not waste time and acted on what Jesus asked him to do, to look after His mother as his own. John takes Mary under his wing, **and** her other four sons as well. He did not say, *Lads, you elder brother did not say anything about you, only that I should care for your mother.* John took them in as his own family; they were after all part of Mary's emotional support at this previous time).

This group gathered in the upper room have learned what it means to be **surrendered**. They were unified in devoting themselves to prayer - that precious means-of-access God has given us to Himself, about which Jesus taught us much. The disciples and a few others **devoted themselves to prayer**; they were in dialogue with God the Father, getting ready, preparing themselves for what He was about to do.

Please click your browser's back button to return to the Church website (or click [HERE](#)).

This period of waiting and preparation leading up to Pentecost, echoes our own story as a Church. And I hope, what we have learned as a church, are lessons we can take into our own individual lives.

Preparing for Pentecost is getting ready for the Holy Spirit to **lend His power** to we the Church, to help complete God's mission on earth.

Pentecost is an event which is part of the whole story of God.

At Creation, God was all around us

During the Flood, God cradled His chosen

During the Exodus, God led and fed His chosen children

In Bethlehem was God with us all (Emmanuel!)

At Calvary, God was for us, and

During Pentecost, God is in us.

Let's get ready then for the **Return of the Christ - the Holy Spirit strikes back!** Its not a made up sequel; its the penultimate chapter of human history before we enter into God's eternal kingdom!

AMEN.