Week 1 - The Waiting Room

The Wait
Waiting can be difficult, yet it is in waiting that we grow spiritually and build our faith in Jesus Christ.

This series challenges us to have a different view of waiting. Often we view waiting as doing nothing. Nothing is not the correct image for how and what we are waiting for. The series gives the fundamentals of how to wait well. What are we expected “to do” when we wait? What are we expected to “not do” as we wait? Both are good questions to explore this season.

This week, the first week of the series, uses key biblical characters (Anna, Simeon, Israel) to show us what it means to wait and how we can wait this season for Jesus to come anew into our lives. Sometimes we have to decrease the volume of activity during Advent to truly experience the goodness of God coming into our lives. The creative illustration during the message is the pouring of a cup of coffee that overflows to make a mess.

Felt Need: Waiting is hard. How can we better focus and make the most of our wait time?

Call To Worship or Invitation to Worship
Good morning. Today is the first Sunday of day of Advent. Advent is a season of waiting and preparing for Jesus to come into our world and into our lives.

Let’s be honest, a season of waiting doesn’t sound much fun does it? I don’t know about you, but I hate to wait. How many of you are already excited about Christmas? Well too bad… you have to wait! (said with a wink and a nod). How many of you are anticipating a nice Sunday lunch this afternoon? Well too bad, you have to wait!

Waiting can be excruciating can’t it? I mean, who wants to wait for their package to arrive? Who wants to wait to be served? Who WANTS to wait to open their presents? None of us, right?

One of my least favorite places to be is the waiting room. Who invented this place of boredom, elevator music, and month old magazines? Whether at the doctor’s office, BMV, a restaurant or any number of other places where you have to wait, waiting rooms are uncomfortable.

When you find yourself in a waiting room, what do you do? You zone out, play a game on your phone, twiddle your thumbs, or stare at the TV tuned to whatever station can be received by an antenna.

Some of us - the most advantageous of us - come prepared to get things done. We bring our laptops, our pens and paper, our crochet needles and yarn - we make the most of our time.
This morning we have a choice, how are we going to use our time in the waiting room? Will you be like Simeon, Anna and Israel as they waited for the Messiah? They stay focused on what they were waiting for, and determined to be intentional about what they would and wouldn't do as they waited. They actively waited. They were not idle.

Let’s celebrate together as we make the most of our time in the waiting room.

**Message Notes**

**Mark 13:24-37** *(The Second Coming of Christ)*

The Holman New Testament Commentary Mark refers to the events in this passage as the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 or to the events immediately preceding the end of time. This also could be a dual reference for both the near prophesy of the fall of Jerusalem and the coming end times. If this is the case, then Jesus was referring to the events most likely to affect the believers at that time, which would be the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70. But he may have been referring as well to the end times. At the same time, however, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ all seem to go together. God’s desire is that everyone repent. He could be holding back the last stage of the coming of the end times (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9–10). This understanding of “all these things” (v29) would make “this generation” mean that the return of Christ is at hand for every generation.¹

For this message a focus can be made on waiting for the second coming of Jesus AND/OR Jesus coming into our lives this year at Christmas.

Let’s take a look at this video about Advent -
Video from bustedhalo.com -  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S02KOlw7dIA

Advent is a time of waiting and preparing for Jesus to come into our lives at Christmas. Waiting can be difficult so we dive deeper into what does it mean to wait, challenges we face when waiting, and what biblical characters teach us about how to wait.

*What does it mean to wait?*
- We cannot make or affect something happening
- Totally dependent upon someone or something else happening

*Why don’t we like to wait?*
- Out of our control
- Most of us like to do something, so we sometimes do something that may not be aligned with God’s way.
- Fear - fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear the thing we are waiting on may not happen. Fear causes us to choose

ADVENT - The Waiting Room Sunday Messages

- If we don’t do “something”, who will? Doesn’t it have to be done?

Who is waiting in the Bible?
Simeon, Anna, and Israel wait for the Messiah.
These individuals teach us about how to wait. They are focused on what they are waiting for and they choose what they will and “will not” do as they wait.

Mark 13:33, 35 “Stay Alert, Be Ready, Watch for His Return” - these words from our reading tell us directly how to wait - with a focus on Jesus!

Scripture that teaches us how these people wait well? (Luke 2:25-38)
- Each received a promise, each is waiting on something specific. Simeon - The Spirit revealed to him he would see the Messiah before he died.
  Each of us has to be ready, we have to know the promise and be aware that Christ can come at any time. Our promise is Jesus will come again.
- Actively waiting - each person has choices, what they will or will not do during while they are waiting.
  Anna is not idle, she is in the temple every day, she fasts and comes to praise God in the temple every day as she waits. Anna chooses what she will and won’t do (Luke 2:37b)
- Their wait is open ended, yet they let go of their own wishes and trust in God’s will, upon delivery of the promise they give all the glory to God.

ILLUSTRATION INTRODUCTION - We all have choices to make in how we will spend our time. Are we dedicating some time to God and if so what part of our lives are we choosing to contribute to God and His work in the world today. During this Advent season, are we going to join in the hectic and chaotic time of Christmas or will we stop and choose a few things this year as we wait for Christmas Day to arrive?

The Illustration - Pour a cup of coffee or tea and let it overflow.

Talk about as the cup is filling - we start out the holiday season with good cheer, get together with a few friends, then we add some decorations, start to shop a bit. At this point the cup is full but NOT overflowing. IT starts to over flow as you say, then we add more parties, more decorations, more shopping, more, more… until your list is so long and everything is overflowing and you can’t control it and thus it becomes a mess.

CHALLENGE: take one thing off your calendar this week or Advent season. Tone down the artificial components and choose simpler ways to wait for the ultimate celebration of Jesus coming into the world.
Sources for all weeks

Blumhardt, Christoph, Nouwen, Henri, Stringfellow, William, Watch For The Light Reading for Advent and Christmas, Plough Publishing House, 2001


Lucado, Max, When God Whispers Your Name, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1999.
