



# Auburn Presbyterian Church

*Passionately loving the Lord Jesus Christ and radiating that love to every individual*

13025 Bell Air Drive, Auburn, CA 95603 (530) 823-3916 auburnpres@gmail.com

## **“What Are You Waiting For?” John 14:15-27; 15:26-27; Luke 24:36-53**

This past Thursday was Ascension Day—something most mainline Protestants ignore. Too bad for us. Churches that emphasize the Holy Spirit are exploding in growth, all over the world. Hmm. Is there something there for us to notice? We tend to neglect the Holy Spirit; the Spirit has been called, “the neglected member of the Trinity”. Let’s see—The Trinity has God the Father/Creator, God the Son/Jesus Christ, and God the Neglected/Holy Spirit. Is that how it is for you? If we don’t have all of God, I’m not sure we have God at all. And we surely don’t have God’s power—resurrection power—flowing through us! Let me read the Ascension Day passage from Luke 24 now, as Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection, and then ascends to the Father, with a command for his people. Listen for the Word of God through Luke. [text]

This is kinda like what people tell me about the Army—“hurry up and wait”—isn’t it? Can’t you imagine the excitement of Jesus’ disciples as he appears with them after he’s been raised from death? But after only a short time, Jesus gives them an order to wait in Jerusalem “until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Huh? I would think these people would be ready right then and there to “charge Hell with a squirt gun”, full of enthusiasm to get out there and be Jesus’ witnesses. Jesus says, “Wait”.

Do you like to wait? I don’t. I think I was in the wrong line when “patience” was being passed out. Our whole culture is about “get it now”, “convenience and instant gratification”. This order from Jesus to wait doesn’t sit well with us.

Why do you suppose we don’t like to wait? Well, waiting makes us dependent upon something or someone else, doesn’t it? It reminds us that we are not kings and queens of the universe, *above* everyone and everything. When we were little children, we might have thrown a fit if we didn’t get our way *NOW*. As adults, of course, we’re much more restrained—but the strain is still there, isn’t it?

Well, what were they waiting for, these disciples? Jesus is pretty vague—they need to wait for him to send them “what the Father has promised”. Next Sunday is Pentecost, 50 days from Passover, when God delivers on Jesus’ promise, sending the Holy Spirit. Then “all heaven breaks loose” on earth, as we’ll see. But today, we need to focus on the waiting, and what it is we wait for—or not. . . .

We’re waiting for God to connect with us, so that God can work through us. This is the message of our text from John’s gospel, chapter 14. Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit. Listen for all the “relational language” in the passage from John 14, verses 15-27, and then chapter 15, verses 26 & 27. Listen most of all for God’ Word TO US TODAY, as I read these

words aloud. *[text]*

Jesus is with the disciples. He says that won't last much longer. He earlier asked them to "abide", or "remain" in him. Not just "with him", but "in him". That's intimate relationship. [Now, how can THAT happen, the disciples might be asking, if Jesus is going away—and what of any of this could his disciples have understood at this point, anyway?]

I don't want you to be alone, Jesus says. (Hear that concern for connection?) I'll ask the Father, and He will send the Holy Spirit to be with you, so you won't be alone. In John's account, Jesus actually gives the Spirit to his disciples while he still lives with them (John 20:22). It's John's version of Pentecost, and since time isn't important for John in his record, he wants to wedge this in so it's fulfilled while Jesus is still with "the guys"—at least, that's my guess. In Luke's "Gospel of the Church" we call Acts, Luke records Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection and saying, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." From this we learn that resurrection power comes from the Holy Spirit. But notice: the Holy Spirit does not "send" the power; the Holy Spirit brings the power. Resurrection power is in the presence of the Spirit; it's not something we get and then run with. Resurrection power comes through relationship—relationship, connection, God in us.

The key word in this John passage—especially the famous John 15 picture of "Jesus the vine, we are the branches" is "remain", or "abide", as different translations render the Greek word, *maneo*. Hang out with Jesus. The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God. Connect. Relationship. Remain.

I got another reminder of this, during my vacation with Sharon. We had a great time. We went to the desert of California and Death Valley, and then Zion and Bryce National Parks. Some of you who have been with the church for years may remember Doug Gregg and Catherine Gregg; they each lead a retreat for us when we used to go to our Presbyterian conference center at Zephyr Point, at Lake Tahoe. Catherine had been ordained as an Episcopal priest, and she was being installed as rector of the Episcopal church in St. George, Utah. I wanted to be there to support and encourage her, so we built the trip around that date. It was just great to be with Sharon, even if it sometimes seemed like endless driving; we just get so little time together that it's a real treat to be together.

And even when we're doing chores together on Saturdays, just knowing that she is doing her part to make the house and garden grow gives me a boost on the chores I am doing, even if I'm out of earshot. Maybe I'm mowing the lawn, or installing a light; she's pulling weeds and planting new flowers. (Eisley's loves to see us coming!) It's just more fun to work together, to play together, to learn together.

You see, we were not meant to live lonely lives, God tells us in Genesis 2:18—we were not meant to live apart from God, nor apart from other people. Connection is in our design. Our Wild West notion of self-sufficiency is toxic; it goes against the way God designed us. And why would we want to live without God? That is certainly not what God wants—for himself, or for us. How do we remedy this, in a culture that emphasizes individual self-sufficiency?

Jesus teaches us in John 14 and 15 that God is relationship. The nature of God is community. The picture of God called "The Trinity" was created by early Christians to try to

portray this. Jesus was called, “Emanuel”, which from Hebrew means, “God with us”. The Holy Spirit (see v. 17, 18) is “Jesus with us.” Are you getting this?

How well does an electric appliance do if disconnected from the power socket? When the power goes down at our house, our refrigerator can hold food for hours, if we don’t open the door. But that can’t last all that long; the refrigerator can’t do its job without power, and the food slowly spoils. I remember last year in New Orleans working on flooded houses, the worst part was those refrigerators that had been sitting there for 10 months or more, with their original food. Yum! [By the way, we’re getting calls about returning to the Gulf Coast. Anyone interested?]

No connection, no power.

And that’s true for us: without connecting with God constantly, God’s power is not in us. Connecting with God requires “proximity”. It’s not something we take from God, and go. Break the connection, the power runs down. Then, “it’s just us,” again. “Just us”—“just lil’ ol’ me”—is not God’s design for us, and never was. Jesus’ life and death and resurrection, and the connection with God the Holy Spirit provides, restores the opportunity for Garden-of-Eden-like intimacy with God, with His power flowing through us to do what He tells us to do.

Sometimes you send for tickets to an event—a play, or concert—and there a stub you are to turn in at the door. The stub says, ‘Void if detached’. . . . Are you detached from God?

Is “Christian” a label for you, or a life?

This is what we should be waiting for—God’s Spirit. Next Sunday is the church holy-day of Pentecost—50 days after Passover, when God gave the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ disciples as Jesus promised in the Luke passage.

What do we do while we wait? We “remain” in Jesus—read His word, as the men have taken 2 years and 2 months to read Matthew. Digest it. Listen for His voice. Bring your life under the light of God’s Word in Scripture. Remain in Jesus. Talk with him; listen to Him, as God tells us to do. The first thing to do while we wait is “remain” in Jesus.

The second thing to do while we wait is “ask, seek, and knock”, as Jesus told us to do. Ask God, seek God, knock hard on God’s door—for that power connection with God that is the Holy Spirit—next Sunday, or whenever God will give it to you.

Both the “remaining” and “asking” make us dependent upon God. The waiting makes us dependent upon God. Is Christian for you a label or a life? Here’s a way to prove it: wait, actively asking and listening and conforming your life to Jesus’ values of justice and mercy and love. And yes—this is totally at odds with how all of us are raised and own basic human wiring. We need God’s help, even to wait. Can you depend on God that much?

(Isn’t that what ‘faith’ really is?)

Now you know what you are waiting for!

[This sermon preached to the congregation of Auburn Presbyterian Church, Auburn, California on May 20, 2007, by Rev. Kenneth B. Winter.]