

A Waiting World.

Text: Rom. 8:18-23

1) The reason

Suggested Hymns:

2) The remedy

571, 416, 556, 191, 490

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 8:18–23, *¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth [pains] together until now.

²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Waiting is one of the most trying of all human experiences. Most people are not able to wait very successfully. This is proved by the way we often push the accelerator to the floor and risk our lives as well as a traffic fine just to get from one place to another a few seconds sooner.

It is proved by the way we invent one time-saving device after another and then complain because even the aeroplane, the telephone, the internet, or the radio are unable to carry us or our messages fast enough.

Ours is an age that just cannot wait. And this inability to wait tends to make us miserable, because waiting is necessary in our kind of world.

Still, it is not half as bad to wait for something we get eventually, as it is to wait for something that never comes. One of the most pathetic figures of fiction is Charles Dickens' Mr. Micawber, who went through life waiting in vain for "*something to turn up.*" And yet it is like this with most of the things the world is waiting for today. They somehow never bring the satisfaction or the happiness that was expected.

Happiness always seems to be just around the corner, and we are always waiting for something else.

It is even so in our individual lives. We start right out in childhood waiting for one big moment after another, and we are always a little disappointed when it finally comes.

We wait to start school, and then we wait to graduate. We wait to get a job, and then we wait for a holiday. We wait to get married and have a family, and then we wait for the family to grow up so that we can be relieved of family cares. We wait until we get a little more money; we wait until our health is better; we wait for a better job or a nicer home. And always we think we are going to be happy, but immediately we start waiting for something else.

The reason for this strange condition as well as the remedy for it is found in our text, in which St. Paul describes *A Waiting World*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Reason For The World's Waiting

The reason for the continuous, restless waiting of our world is not hard to find. This is a dissatisfied and unhappy world. Our text says, "*the whole creation groans and labors with birth [pains] together.*"

You do not wait for something else, if you are satisfied where you are and with what you have. Scripture says in 1 Timothy 6:6-8, *⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

All through our text St. Paul describes the unhappy condition of all created things: "*the sufferings of this present time,*" "*the creation was subjected to*

futility,” “the bondage of corruption,” “birth [pains] together,” “groan within ourselves.” This is a dark and dismal picture of the state of God’s creation.

The Unhappiness of Mankind.

Some may want to disagree with St. Paul. They may say that he paints too dark a picture of life. Things are not quite so gloomy as all that. Surely it pays to wait for something better, because happiness and satisfaction are bound to come at last. Surely there are people on earth who have achieved their goals and have found contentment and peace. But are there?

Is a little more money all that you need? It has been said too often, to require repetition, that no one has ever found satisfaction out of a mere abundance of possessions.

A great successor of Mohammed, Abder-Rahman, who attained great power for the Moslem empire in Spain and accumulated fabulous wealth for himself, is said to have confessed shortly before his death: *“Fifty years have passed since I became head. Riches, honours, pleasures, I have enjoyed all. In this long period of seeming happiness I have numbered the days on which I have been happy. They amount to twenty. And even then I was not completely happy.”*

Or if you think things are different now, listen to the words of one of the greatest publishers, whose profits averaged a million dollars annually for forty years. He declared: *“Today I have forty million dollars, but what has it brought me? Not happiness!”*

Will a little more education bring you satisfaction? Some surveys have shown that the suicide rate is highest among those who have the highest education, and the crime statistics show that some of the worst crimes have been committed by those who were bitter against life because they felt that a good education entitled them to something better than they could obtain.

The ancient preacher was more correct than we may want to admit when he wrote in Ecclesiastes 1:18, ¹⁸ *For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*

Will better health bring you happiness? One of the world’s healthiest men, a lifelong advocate of body building and physical culture, has haunted the divorce

courts with pitiful regularity apparently seeking in vain the home happiness he desires.

Will fame or popularity bring you satisfaction? Ask any former screen or stage star who has now been all but forgotten. Popularity is the most elusive of goals. One is desperately afraid of losing it while it is present and bitter and despondent after it is gone.

The Unhappiness of Nature.

It is hard to see how we can help admitting with St. Paul that “*the whole creation groans and labors with birth [pains] together.*” But you see the Apostle goes even further than just a description of human unhappiness. “*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits.*” He even includes all of nature in his picture of an unhappy and dissatisfied world.

Even birds and beasts and fish, shrubs and trees and mountains and rivers and lakes and oceans, earth and sun and moon and stars — all creation “*groans and labors with birth [pains] together ... waiting.*” The whole world of created things is in a painful and wretched condition, a condition which can best be described as that of waiting or “*earnest expectation.*”

Contrast the world today with the world as God created it and intended it to be. The beasts of the field once lived in perfect harmony with one another so that the wolf could dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the young goat,¹ and the other scenes in that beautiful Bible description of Paradise.

But now the warfare of the animal kingdom is steadier, if not more violent, than the wars of men. The herbs of the field were once beautiful and good for man — every one of them. But now our fields are covered with thorns and thistles, and poisonous growths lurk in unsuspected places, so that agriculture, too, has become a constant battle against the forces of nature.

Wind and wave, flood and earthquake, now bring destruction out of powers that were intended for blessing, as every force on earth seems to protest its unhappy condition.

The Sin of Man Which Caused This Unhappiness

Who is to blame for this state of affairs? Not God; for with all-inclusive finality the sacred account of creation concludes: ***“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”***²

Nature itself is not to blame for St. Paul declares in our text, ***“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it.”*** Someone else did it.

And I am afraid that you and I cannot wriggle out of it. As a part of the human race we also are responsible. For when man first went contrary to the will of God, he disrupted the smoothly working plan of creation.

Like an atomic explosion, he started a chain reaction of evil which has not ended even to the present time. We read in Genesis 4:7, ***And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.*** That is God’s own explanation for all the misery and unhappiness in the world.

Troubles are the result of sin in the world. For sin is a condition of the human heart and soul which causes everything to function improperly, both in an individual life and in the world around it.

St. Paul calls it in our text ***“the bondage of corruption.”*** When you look at the troubles in your life, don’t ask, as so many do: ***“What have I done to deserve this?”*** Your troubles may not be the result of anything you have done, but rather of what you are, of what this whole wide world is, because of sin.

All men and women have troubles. We read in Job 5:7, ***7 Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.*** Circumstances and the providence of God determine the form those troubles take, but the cause is always the same - SIN.

If you do not operate a machine according to instructions; if you do not oil or grease it at the proper time, but do things with it for which it was not intended, it will soon go to pieces.

The same is true of human life and of creation. God gave rules by which the world was to be operated, but people disregarded those rules. Now one part after another is giving way, as the whole machine is rapidly approaching a complete breakdown.

2. The Remedy For The World’s Restless Waiting

Now let us look at the remedy for this pitiful condition. What can be done to repair the machine and make it run smoothly? What can be done to put an end to the earnest waiting and restless longing of our world? We are all waiting for “*redemption*,” the Apostle says, or “*to be delivered*.”

A Complete Redemption from Sin

If you buy a machine and it goes all to pieces because you have failed to operate it correctly, you cannot expect the manufacturer or retailer to replace it for you. It is your loss, and you must suffer the consequences. That would also be justice as far as God is concerned.

But God has been generous beyond words. “*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.*”³ “*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”⁴ A new life is the only answer to this whole disturbed and troubled state. As you are by nature, you can never be happy.

Offered Freely.

Christ has paid the price for a new life for everyone. All you have to do is turn in the old one. God has set up an unconditional guarantee, as written in Ezekiel 36:26, ²⁶ *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you.* Can any offer be more generous than this? Can any solution of the sad waiting of the world be more satisfying and complete?

Often Unaccepted.

And yet there are many who will not take God’s offer. They somehow have the notion that their lives are all right. Of course, something is wrong with the world; something is wrong with their surroundings; something is wrong with their friends and relatives; something is wrong with everything and everybody, but themselves.

And so they do not deem it very urgent to turn to God for a new heart. They can get by all right with the old one. And so they go on waiting, waiting, waiting their lives away in a restless longing that is never satisfied.

Hydrophobia is said to be a very dangerous disease in animals because it will, for example, drive a dog mad with a desire to bite and tear when all the while it dreads the thing it really wants, a drink of water.

So there are people who rush madly about, taking their spite out on everything and everybody, trying to find satisfaction in one thing after another, whereas they are afraid of the one thing they need, the forgiveness and mercy of God. As St. Augustine once put it: *“O Lord, our souls come from Thee, and they know no rest until they rest in Thee.”*

A Final Release from Trouble

Now, this does not mean that a person who is a Christian will immediately be free from all unhappiness, all dissatisfaction, and all waiting and longing.

“Even we ourselves,” the Apostle writes, *groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*” But the difference is that we have what he calls *“the first fruits of the Spirit.”*

Surely we have our moments of depression and disappointment. We have our weaknesses and discouragements. We do not reach perfection until the life to come. But through faith in Christ we can begin to see and feel what it means to have complete peace and joy forever.

One of the first adventurers on the mighty oceans who sailed to South America went around a cape on a stormy sea. His ship threatened to go to pieces; so he called the place the Cape of Storms. But Vasco da Gama, who came later, changed the name to the Cape of Good Hope, for he saw ahead of him the jewels and treasures of India.

You can call this life, a life of storms if you wish. But if you can see ahead of you the glorious redemption of eternity, you can call it what it is, only in Christ, a life of good hope. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Isa. 11:6

² Gen. 1:31.

³ Gal. 3:13

⁴ Rom. 5:8