

**1<sup>st</sup> UMC Message – version 12/11/16**

**Greg Scott for Dec 10 5:30 PM & Dec 11 8:30 AM 2016**

**Title: What Am I Waiting For?**

**Scripture: Eccl: 4:9-10 & 4:12**

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus we love you and want to please you. I pray that my thoughts and words are pleasing to you and to the Glory of God. Amen.

## **Introduction**

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

The question is “what am I waiting for?” Has this ever occurred to you, has there ever been a situation where you felt “what am I waiting for?” Maybe you were praying about it, or perhaps you are looking for a sign of some sort, that might help you make a decision?

It is my pleasure to be able to talk with you the next few minutes. When Pastor Richard asked me if I would be interested in sharing something about my faith journey, or share a devotional thought on a passage of Scripture this topic of “what am I waiting for?” immediately came to mind since I had actually been trying to create a talk about that thought. More about that a little later, but I want to emphasize I am not “asking what are you waiting for?” Please know that I am not asking this question in a presumptuous way.

For today, I am sharing more about about what goes on in my current faith journey rather than my entire life, with emphasis on the impact my men’s small group has had on my life and influenced decisions I make. It has had somewhat of a “snowball” effect in many of the things I do. When I say spiritual journey, I am also referring to some issues that we encounter today in our modern world, or shall I say postmodern world. My hope is to perhaps leave you with a thought or two that might help you in your day to day life.

Let me say that I am humbled and honored to be here sharing with you today. I am a broken person and not perfect. But I am thankful for the love of Christ in my life and the friendship of many other Christians in my life who walk with me on this journey called life. I am going to share some things that I am trying to do to help spread the word of God, and share the love of Christ with a hurting world through words and actions. Please do not think I am patting myself on the back, far from it. I know many; many

people here today, in this church and community have done, and do, much more. I have found that hearing about what someone else is doing in the journey has given me something to think about so it is this regard that I share with you.

So why the the title "What am I waiting for?" ...well the reason I titled this "what am I waiting for?" is because I used to carry a few extra dollars with me in my Bible case just in case there was some sort of a sale Fellowship Hall (like hoagies) or my kids needed some money for some sort of special project here at the church for some other reason that I had envisioned, that I would have it on hand – so I could use for some purpose within the church. Because I was always afraid that maybe I wouldn't make it to the ATM on Friday, or I might spend the money in my wallet even if I went to the ATM and I'd have no cash, so I kept a few dollars in my Bible case.

I can't say exactly when, but if there was one thing that happened to me, it was a day after listening to a Brennan Manning CD with my small group. Incidentally, I will mention him a few times in this talk. He spoke about one of our biggest problems is deluding ourselves. It dawned on me "what am I waiting?" I should put that money in the offering plate and let it go to good use within the church now rather than later at a time when I decide it's a good time. (This seems like a small inconsequential event – but it actually was a significant event as many "small everyday ordinary occurrences in our lives are" actually significant. I was probably trying to control the situation rather than be led by the spirit. So since that time it seems there is constantly a question that occurs to me "am I deluding myself" and that often ties into "what am I waiting for?" when it comes to my Christian life. For me, it doesn't mean I should do everything that comes along. For me it is more a way to think about what I am being led to do by God in a particular situation, and for me that usually involves both discussing it with the guys in my group and quiet time by myself.

### **Journey – the impact of a small group on my life**

1. The scripture I chose was probably written by Solomon in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BC. In Ecclesiastes I think he talks a lot about "all things that happen on earth under the sun". In these verses from the Living Bible he talks about what appears to be people working together. In this case Solomon talks about people working together to accomplish earthly tasks: 9 – Two can accomplish more than twice as much as one for the results can be much better. That sounds good. 10 – If one falls the other pulls him up, but if a man falls when he is alone, he's in trouble. Makes sense, if I fall off the ladder it's good if someone is nearby to help me get back up. 12 – And one standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can

stand back to back and conquer; three is even better, for triple braided cord is not easily broken...that also sounds good especially if I were to be in a battle. One thing I've found in scripture is it can often (probably even usually) carry a physical interpretation as well as a spiritual interpretation. I've just comment on the physical interpretation. I believe there are spiritual aspects and those spiritual aspects tie in to the benefits of a small group. As a matter of fact, I use verse 10 as the memory verse for my small group. I had the opportunity to join this small men's group about 10 years ago and it has made a very big difference in my life. From a Spiritual standpoint there is a group of four other men to help me if I "fall". There is a group of four other men to help me do spiritual battle. One example is it has helped in times when corporate worship did not seem to be reaching me. Another example was just this past week when my mother was taken to the hospital by ambulance. She and I were both comforted by knowing my group was praying for her. She was extremely encouraged when I told her the group was praying for me. She is slowly improving.....I believe in many ways thanks to those prayers.

2. One of the issues we're talking and praying about at present in the group is the scriptural truth compared to Worldly perceptions. We are reading a book called The Trouble with Truth. The author Rob Renfroe talks about the importance of scriptural truth and the rock of God does not change compared to the modern world otherwise known as postmodern view where truth can be what you perceive it to be and what it is and how it is personalized to you. The book of Isaiah tells us God is clear about his positions and not changing based on perceptions, he says: *I am God and I do not change*. So his question becomes, *how do you balance compassion with the truth in this type of a situation?* I encounter this on a periodic basis with people I meet. I don't know if you have a quiet place to go to pray and contemplate and be with God. The place I enjoy going is Memorial Field in Moorestown. My little dog has since passed away but I used to walk him there all the time. It was peaceful and a good place to clear your mind and think without the clutter of daily distractions – something very important whether contemplating life in general, your job, or your faith. The thing that was truly special was the view from the lower end of the field looking back up towards Main St. There among the expansiveness of the beautiful sky opening up the the heavens above was the steeple of Trinity church rising above

the trees with the cross on top. I don't know if you have a quiet place to go to get away from the hustle and bustle to think, but I encourage you try it there at least one time. It truly is a beautiful and inspirational sight. While you are there you try singing the doxology.

3. For example, many in our Post Modern culture want to tell you all religions are the same. How do you respond in a truthful yet compassionate way? When walking at Memorial Field I occasional encounter I man who reflects this post modern view of thinking as he will say things like "all religions are the same" or something similar. In this case, I think "what I was waiting for" is the small group discussion about the postmodern world view that I am currently involved in. After this book and discussion, I will have a better way of discussing the truth in a compassionate way with him and others.
  
4. As a man, I think about the responsibilities that come with being a husband, father, son, brother, friend and more. Providing for my family, my faith, my church and more. The modern world often defines a man as being more "macho" than anything else. There are not really too many "heroes" as there were in the past. Although John Glenn, who recently passed is one who can be considered a hero in our society. In his book Seven Men and the Secret to their Greatness, Eric Metaxas (national radio host and involved with Veggie Tales) addresses this issue. He talks about "What is a man?" and "What makes man great?" He discusses seven men who all had a profound impact on our world and life. All demonstrated one particular quality: that of surrendering themselves to a higher purpose, of giving something away that they might have kept. All did this in one way or another. Doing this is noble and admirable, and it usually takes courage and usually takes faith. He has Jesus at the top of his list but does not include on this list. One of the men he wrote about was George Washington our first President. Washington was said to pray and ask God for guidance daily. It was said that officers arriving at his tent in the morning found him praying or doing devotions. You may recall seeing the portrait of him kneeling by his horse in prayer which reflects his deep faith. It is not often discussed, but in his farewell speech as he was ending his second term, he said in his outgoing presidential address that religious principles are needed for National morality. Let me repeat that...religious principles are needed for National morality. That is, religion is

critical for setting the morals and values of the country. A very important message from a man who serves as an example for our country.

5. One of the things I enjoy doing with the other men of this church and the men of Marlton Methodist church is we usually attend a National Men's conference together called Iron Sharpens Iron Men's conference. One year I attended recently, I heard about the issues for the people of the South Sudan in Africa. At that conference I was given the opportunity to financially support a Chaplain in the South Sudanese Army (South Sudan is a Christian nation) fighting every day for their lives against those in North Sudan. When I heard this I said "what am I waiting for?" and now make a monthly financial commitment that helps support him and his family of wife and daughters.
6. Also, when I had the opportunity to mentor a member of the confirmation class this year, I had to ask myself "what am I waiting for?" after quiet thought and discussions with my group I was led to volunteer. And, as he has no father due to his father passing on, I am continuing to try to develop a relationship with him. Hopefully I will be able to be an example in his life and he will know that I am a man who cares about him.
7. As I mentioned earlier, I've heard several Brandon Manning talks and he says that we delude ourselves. I do think that is true. And that is probably one of my biggest challenges. But we have the image of Christ to help us. But I also have a group of brothers that will help to. I believe what Proverbs 27:17 says, "*As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another.*"
8. So what is so special about this group? To me it's a group that I can call at 2 o'clock in the morning when a tree falls through the roof of my house or the water pipe breaks. But even more important is they are concerned for my soul, my spiritual journey. They ask about what I am thinking about things, they follow up with me and help me stay accountable by suggesting ideas and encouraging me. To that I say "Thank you Lord"! I can share what's going on in my life. Also a group that I can study God's word or another book, and we know there's plenty of Christian books out there to read. And it's a group who will pray for me. I find that extremely powerful and encouraging when someone will take the time and pray for me specifically. I am thankful to God for that. I then have the opportunity to pray for him. I don't know too many other more powerful ways someone can convey their interest in my life other than actually praying for me that way.

9. Although a small group may not be for everyone, I pray for those have no one to talk to, no one to share their life experiences with, and no one to pray for them and with them on a weekly basis. I like to think of it as walking alongside each other. As John Wesley says, he called small groups "class meetings", and asked "How is it with your soul?" To have someone follow up with me about my soul on a regular weekly basis is just a blessing.
  
10. With reference to people deluding themselves into believing their own form of reality and not really paying attention to reality. Proverbs says a "wise man listens to a wise man and a fool listens to himself". That is another reason I like the group. Well being in a group allows me to get the benefit of wisdom a group of Godly Man who are attempting to walk the walk with God. They also help me to fulfill my responsibilities as a man. And I will say for me it has been very helpful to be able to get advice and suggestions from men from a spectrum of ages, both older than me and younger than me.
  
11. One thing this has allowed me to do is to become more confident in my decisions because I believe they are more inspired by God. If I believe I am "speaking up" because of God is telling me within I believe there can be no harm in that. And unfortunately, I can say there were times when I did not speak up and I should have. If I had, some problems which occurred might not have occurred. I may not be the most popular guys, but let me tell you, now I always speak up in those situations in a hopefully polite way – and this is one of the times that the question "what am I waiting for?" is amplified 10 times. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer (another of the seven men in Eric Metaxas's book) said "To not speak is to speak".
  
12. The last journey experience I will share with you is something I've done to try to improve my Evangelism. Not that I'm doubting my skills per se but wanting to do what the Lord would have me do and do it in a Christian way. So when I thought about this of course the question crossed my mind..."what am I waiting for?" In response to that...one of the things I've started doing lately is greeting new people that move into my neighborhood. I give them some pastries from Panera and give them a card welcoming them to the neighborhood, sharing some info about the church, letting them know to give me a call if I can help with anything. It has actually been well received by the people. One case the man used to attend the church and in another I knew the family through an acquaintance of my daughter.

## **Conclusion**

13. So in conclusion, as I ask myself "what am I waiting for?" perhaps it has caused you to think about some things in your own life. Whether you have something on your mind that you might be asking what am I waiting for? Or at some point in the future, perhaps some of these thoughts may be helpful to you.

14. There are multiple ways to look at things and this is simply one way to look at them and I hope it may have helped.

15. Whatever it is I pray that you will be able to answer the question "what am I waiting for?" when it comes.

I hoped you have enjoyed something I have said.

Please feel free to share your comments with me if you wish.

Peace of Christ be with you.

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