

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.<sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit.”

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk[c] from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

### **Hurry up and wait**

I took a course in church architecture a while back. It fun but it was also work, involving church tours, and digital tours of churches we weren’t able to visit. By the end of the class we were expected to be able to determine what denomination a church was based on the architecture. One of churches was full of hand painted cathedral ceilings, woodwork, the massive organ, or the raised preaching platform with the hood to aid in projecting the voice, but next to the lectern were three hour glasses in a row. And jokingly we pointed to

the hour glasses as evidence of a Lutheran church because if there is one thing that hasn't changed in 500 years is the fact that we can't wait for the preacher to hurry up and finish. So he hurries up and we wait.

I wonder if the disciples were thinking the same way when Jesus ascended into heaven. They were ready for Jesus to hurry up and restore the Kingdom of Israel and they were ready to wait. They were ready to go out with him and conquer the world when Jesus says, "Go back and wait." While they are waiting for Jesus to hurry up and return and angel prods them with, "Hurry up," and the hourglass flips over.

Sometimes we feel the same way. We'd wish Jesus would hurry up and return but we're still waiting looking up into the sky and wondering when if ever he will return and take us to be with him. While waiting we are prodded by a brother or sister to "Hurry up." Whether you hurry up or wait. Remember Jesus and his work for you.

Jesus had been at work for his disciples his entire life. He had eagerly waited for that hour. That hour had come. Jesus is alive. He's been around for the past 40 days appearing at different times instructing the church and leaving them no doubt that he is risen from the dead. Jesus appeared to his disciples giving them many proofs. He ate with them, allowed them to put their fingers in his wounds. Paul even reports he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Now was the time for Jesus to take his place as King. But then, wait...

*"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* They wanted Jesus to hurry up and restore his kingdom. They wanted it to happen now, on their schedule. They are ready for Jesus to hurry up and wait on him. But now, Jesus turns it around, "You wait... I'm leaving. Go back. *You will be my witnesses.*"

You can imagine the questions, What? Wait..., *"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* <sup>7</sup> *He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Jesus tells them, *"You aren't going to know when this will take place. It's not for you to know."* They want to go home. They want to be with their Savior. Maybe they are still thinking of an earthly kingdom. Maybe they are hoping Jesus will lead the way after all the Pharisees and teachers of the law tried to kill him once and he came

back, they won't try that again. But no, "I'm' going home. Wait - and the hourglass flips over again.

The church has waited for their king to hurry up but I'm not so good at waiting. If I had sat in that old church the only thing I would focus on would be those grains of sand. In general we're not very good at waiting in fact we'll focus on our live sometimes like a watched pot. We want to go home. We agree with Paul, "*to live is Christ to die is gain.*" "*I desire to depart and be with Christ*" (Philippians 1:23). This is a painful world, full of sorrow on the road to heaven. You may feel forgotten and question, "When if ever are you going to come for me?" And all Jesus says to us is, "*It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set...*" We may want to go home. You may be ready to go home but ours is not to question or wonder when.

Our strength may be poured out, we may question, "Why am I still here?" And all we hear is, "*You will be my witnesses.*", But instead of working there are times that we wait and watch the clock. Wait for pastor to get done. We may adopt an Eeyore attitude grumble and complain, question existence and why we are here.

If not Eeyore then there is the princess complex that complains, "I can't work in such conditions." Condemn the world because they're beyond hope anyhow. We want Jesus to hurry up and wait on us expecting an earthly kingdom, the greatest things now, a kingdom or a country now. This princess complex tells us we need to enjoy life while we still can, so ignore the hurry up and just wait.

The amazing thing is that Jesus has waited on us. He even waits for us, patiently prodding us to hurry up. Jesus ascends into heaven. Sends the Holy Spirit who hurries to work comforting his people with the completed work.

Jesus has hurried; worked and waited but now that work is finished. There was no longer any reason for him to stick around waiting. Just outside of Jerusalem on a hillside, in front of his disciples, he ascended into the sky blessing them until he was hidden by a cloud. Now he sits and rules the world for the good of the church. He's still working. Interceding for his church. Guiding and calling those waiting home. Everything he did here on earth was just the beginning.

Jesus' disciples were told to wait, but there wasn't time for the disciples to sit around watching the sky for his return. There was urgent work to be done. *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white*

stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? Because Jesus just ascended. He just went up and we are waiting for him to come back down. In that question, “Why are you standing here looking up?” there was also a rebuke. Hurry up. There isn’t much time.

Just when they thought they were done they realize this is just the beginning. They return to Jerusalem rejoicing reassured that Jesus will return, that he will send the Holy Spirit to empower them, go with them, give them the words to say. They are equipped to carry the message to the end of the earth. They are ready but for now they wait.

So when you feel forgotten remember his work, his wait, his ascension. Do you really think that he has suffered so much for your sake that he will suddenly leave you behind? Do you think that he will not be with you as he always had? He has kept every promise. Even when you have wandered from him he called to you. He has placed his Holy Spirit in you who calls to you when you turn from God. So maybe you feel small and insignificant but now you are sons and daughters of our king.

He won’t remain seated forever. One more bit of work left for him to do. *This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*” We were given power to carry out God’s assignment not our wish list. So what can you do? If you are interested in serving at church come to the meetings. If you can’t do that remember your call is to be his witness and you can point people to Jesus instead of your hurrying up and your work. You can point to his work for you.

Just when you think you are done, the hour glass flips over and life goes on. You realize this is just the beginning. Maybe you’ll return home, hopefully rejoicing reassured that Jesus will return. That he has sent the Holy Spirit through his Word. That he goes with you. That you are equipped to carry the gospel. Just wait - he will come but until then hurry up and hear what he has done.

Sermons aren’t as long as they once were. We don’t even need an hourglass anymore. But the evidence for that church being Lutheran wasn’t just found at the edge of a lecture but is also seen in the elevation of God’s Word, the position and prominence of a Baptismal font as well as a gathering space to celebrate the unity we have in communion. It was the many and multiple witnesses of art and architecture that pointed to the Work of Jesus on our behalf.

If it feels like life is ending and the hourglass is flipped over again and you have to wait go back to his word. Remember, what you have even if you only have the opportunity to tell one person. The wait is worth it. So we pray hurry up and come Lord Jesus, we are waiting for you and while we wait, we recall your words, your work and share that with others.