



The connection between waiting and hoping.

Psalm 70

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me!

Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life.

Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me.

Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!" turn back because of their shame.

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you.

Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!

You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!

Time shows us the mighty hand of God. We simply watch and wait.

How many of us joined "wait watchers" this past week? Probably every one of us. We watched the election coverage and waited for news of the results. And waited. And waited.

2020 has been quite a year. Most of the nation has been hoping it would on a hopeful note. So many of the things that we've been able to do for years have been impacted by the realities of living during a pandemic. The uncertainty about how things can happen has plagued us at almost every turn. Life has become filled with unimagined risks and unavoidable sacrifices. Opposites have become partners: alone together, social distance, wanting to be negative. We keep hoping to begin the road back to something close to normal, but that path keeps moving ahead of us, uncontrollably.

We're tired of this. We want to go home. We want to live without guarding against exposure. We want to hug our loved ones, shake the hands of our friends, and sit with them in church.

I think just about everyone was hoping this past week's election would provide the direction that could give us hope. And we waited. And waited. And waited.

Yesterday we got closer to the resolution of the event that could clarify our direction for the next few years. Almost half of us heard news of hope. And almost half of us heard news of disappointment. In the days ahead, we all realize that one person, no matter how well connected they are, no matter how experienced they are, no matter how compassionate and caring they are—no one person will lead us to a new normal by themselves. It's going to take all of us, not alone together, but truly together together, to do what we must do to eliminate COVID-19 and shape our world in a post-pandemic reality.

Time shows us the mighty hand of God. We simply watch and wait.

When we look at Psalm 70, we see the position of the person of faith—waiting and watching for God. Let's go through it verse by verse and see the actions of a person of faith, watching for the mighty hand of God to move.

Verse one says, "*Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to*

help me!” Notice that in distress, the psalmist looks to God for deliverance, for help. You can hear the anxiety in the word “haste.”

Verse two starts out with *“Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life.”* The psalmist, and by extension believers, ask God to speak to the conscience of those who are intending harm to God’s people. If God’s appeal to their conscience doesn’t change the aggression, the psalmist asks God to confuse their opponent. Have you ever been in a place where there is an abundance of chaos? It’s hard to focus. It’s nearly impossible to complete a task systematically because you are constantly distracted and disrupted.

Verse two continues, *“Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me.”* Not only does the psalmist ask God to stand in the way of the oppressor, but to also open the eyes of those around so they do not become the target of the one who hinders God’s work. And do you know what the psalmist has to do? Just watch and wait.

Have you ever experienced someone wagging their finger at you? That’s kind of what’s going on in verse three. *“Let those who say, “Aha, Aha!” turn back because of their shame.”* When those around the psalmist see their part in the situation, the psalmist hopes God will illuminate them to see a bigger picture, too. Remember God is a God of relationship. Bringing people together is one that requires forgiveness and restoration. It’s up to everyone to do their part in reestablishing and strengthening the ties that bind us together.

The focus of the prayer takes a turn in verse four. *“Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’”* Here the psalmist says the person of faith is supported by a greater community who have the same goal—seeking God. The words they speak remind the person in distress that God IS great. This provides encouragement in trying times. It connects us to a reality that others see—and because of anxiety escapes the individual.

Finally, verse five returns to the person in the situation: But I am poor and

needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!” Acknowledging their own vulnerability, they reiterate their dependence on God’s action.

We are a nation that is divided, relationships are strained and many are broken. We are hurting, individually and collectively. The days and weeks and months ahead will require us to see the mighty hand of God. We need to watch and wait

I want to encourage you to engage in at least one of the following ways we can be sure the power of our faith is part of the fabric of society we weave.

- 1. Reach out to a neighbor who probably has a different political view than you do. Establish a friendship on something besides common political beliefs. Pay special attention to something about them that is worthy of praise and be intentional in letting them know you appreciate their strength. Privately, pray for the relationship.**
- 2. Volunteer a few hours a month in a cause that addresses the needs of those whose lives are not like yours. Learn how they make sense of their world by listening to them. Affirm what they do bring to community, how they make life better for others.**
- 3. Find a faith partner to share your thoughts on the weekly texts from worship. Share insights and questions that the scriptures raise for you. Pray for them and with them. Maybe use the lead story from the newspaper or newscast as the inspiration for one of your prayer petitions. Be sure to share answers to prayer with each other, too.**

We are in a precarious time. We face threats from without—the pandemic, social unrest, and economic uncertainty. We face threats from within—fear and ambiguity coupled with the shorter days and longer nights and social distancing can lead to depression in the strongest people. We do well to be “wait watchers” that look for the things God is blessing and do our best to be part of them. Those who have survived the most devastating events in history—famine, destruction and exile—have come through because they have watched and waited for God, confident that God was at work in ways they might not understand but could be certain was to bless all of creation.

Wait. Watch. Pastor Dan Monson, a scholar of Old Testament Hebrew, told me many years ago something that can help us right here, right now. He said that the Hebrew word “wait” is often correctly translated as “hope.” When we “wait” we “hope.” If you think about it, when a person stops hoping, they often stop waiting. They take things into their own hands and it too often ends tragically. *Time shows us the mighty hand of God. We simply watch and wait. And hope.*