

**THE WAIT IS FINALLY OVER!**  
**Matthew 1:17-25**

**I. INTRO**

- A.** Would anyone like some fudge this morning? Sorry—you're going to have to WAIT—cause, see, that's what this talk is about. WAITING!
- I **hate** waiting! How many of you would agree with me? I put my tea in the microwave for 30 seconds—and I've **got** to find something to do--unload the dishwasher, surf the channels, go to the bathroom—**anything!** To sit there and watch the seconds click by as that thing hums is like Chinese water torture. I know, I'm being a drama queen.
- I **hate** waiting for stop lights. Here's my confession—I'd rather sneak through on the tail end of a yellow light than get stuck! And when someone slows down—as if they're **waiting** for the light to turn yellow....? Well, to follow my own advice from a few weeks ago, I say, "Here's my chance...!"
- And I **hate** it when I call and some gum-chewing clerk says, "Hello, this is Pizza Hut—**can-you-hold-CLICK!**" I want to say, "Of **course** I can't hold. I'm an important customer with only so many minutes left to my life...I'll call Pizza Pizza—**CLICK!**" And this impatient-waiting thing is part of our world.
- We live in the world of **come-on, come-on, come-ON already!** I don't have all day to stand here and WAIT for you to get around to checking my groceries, answering my questions, writing my speeding ticket, checking my blood pressure, restarting my heart or embalming my body!!!!
- B.** One of the hardest—and yet most exhilarating waits is for a baby to be born. That kind of waiting is called...**expecting**. Translated, that means, "It **will** happen, but it's gonna take nine months. No more—and we don't **want** less, really!" On that day—which **will** come, **we'll** meet this brand new human being for the first time. "We're **expecting!**"
1. Of course, expecting a baby is the first in a series of both short and **ve-e-er-ry** long waits. Tired Mom's say, "I can't **wait** until this child sleeps through the night!" Parents with hands that smell like baby wipes say, I can't **wait** until he's potty trained! "I can't **wait** until she starts school!" And then...I can't **wait** until she comes home from university!"
  2. Kids have to wait to. One of the hardest waits is for Christmas. Well, the first people who had to wait for Christmas—waited a lot longer than 364 days! Ironically, both stories of Jesus birth include the genealogies of those who waited year...after year...after year for the Messiah--Christ--**God's Anointed One**—to come. And, ironically, his coming started **another** wait! We're in the middle of that one.
  3. So, today I want to talk about waiting. And how God is in the waiting room with us—not tapping his fingers or doing crossword puzzles—but **fully** engaged!

## II. THE LIGHT AT THE END OF A *VERY* LONG TUNNEL!

- A. To find the point where the wait for Jesus started, you have to go right back to the beginning of everything. Right after Adam and Eve, the first couple, plunged human-kind into the pain we now experience, God spoke.

Not just about judgment—but about hope. About how that just as Satan had bruised the heel of every human, the heel of one of Adam and Eve’s descendants would bruise his head. In the waiting—*hope*.

-Abraham and Sarah, the very two ancestors listed at the beginning of Jesus lineage also got word of how the nation they would miraculously create by having a child in their old age—would ultimately bless *all* nations. And *they* waited—until Sarah was almost 90—and Abraham was almost 100—for their promised son. The key word all through history was—*wait!*

1. Well almost 500 years later Moses is raised up to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the land God had promised them. He never got to go into the land, but before he died, Moses pointed forward. Through him, God said: **I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. (Deuteronomy 18:18-19 NLT)**

-But...you have to *wait!*

2. The waiting becomes almost unbearable.

But it’s in the crisis times of Israel’s history when it seems all is lost that God speaks again and reveals even more detail—more specifics about this one who will descend from David and make all things right. Like David—this prophet will be the Anointed One of God—but in a much more profound sense.

-They wait some more—and some kings, like Solomon, look promising—but things go from bad to worse. And God speaks again—this time *very* specifically through a prophet named Isaiah. And God announces: **The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’). Isaiah 7:14 NLT**

-A couple of chapters later, Isaiah continues. Listen to how he starts: **Nevertheless, *that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. (Isaiah 9:1-2 NLT)***

-Then these astounding words:

**For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen! (Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT)**

-By the way—want to know when these words were written? About 740 B.C. Right around that same time, another prophet, Micah, writes:

**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from *ancient times*." (Micah 5:2 TNIV)**

-And then? But...you'll have to wait. More heartache. More war. And it appears that all hope is lost.

The northern Kingdom of Israel is conquered and hauled off to Assyria, and the southern kingdom, Judah, is conquered, the temple destroyed—and all the descendents of David hauled off to Babylon. And it **looks** like it's **sayonara**. Th-th-th-at's all folks!

-But...this is God we're dealing with! And out of all this mess comes a prophet named Daniel—who lays out the most specific prophecy yet—along with all the kingdoms that will come and go until this Messiah comes. And then? **More** waiting! all the kingdoms that will arise—right up to the coming of this Promised One. This prophecy is so detailed But it does become clear. No nation, no leader—**no one** rules history. God does. When we wait—it's in **His** waiting room!

- B. That's where this writing in Matthew picks up. After giving this list of all these kings, all these people who waited and waited and waited, Matthew writes:  
**This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah [i.e., *Anointed One*] the son of David, the son of Abraham... (Matthew 1:1 TNIV)**

-And after that long list of people—from Abraham (father of Nations, remember) to Joseph...husband of Mary, mother of Jesus—Matthew writes:

**Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. (Matthew 1:17 TNIV)**

-Can you catch the impact of that? Forty-two generations from this man, Abraham, singled out as the father of a nation from whom **all** nations will be blessed—to the One who will accomplish it all.

1. When Jesus was born, the Jewish scholars had been watching this unbelievable timetable set up by Daniel—and expectations were at an all-time high. People groaned for relief from the brutality and taxation of the Romans. The prayers to God were, in essence, saying "**We can't wait any longer!**"

-You could compare it to carrying a child past your due date. Any Moms here ever had that happen? It's **hard** isn't it? You can't see your feet, your back

aches, you can barely fit behind the steering wheel. And then people ask the question that makes you want to punch their lights out, “You mean you haven’t had that baby **yet?**”

2. Expectations were also running sky high someone else. Can anyone guess where? In Rome. Caesar Augustus had been the first Roman ruler to unite the world of that day. Messengers were sent from Rome to proclaim this good news of peace and a kingdom that will never end.  
-The Roman poet, Virgil said,

**The one who is to come will be the divine king of salvation for whom mankind has waited...He will establish a universal empire of peace in the golden age for the blessing of a renewed humanity.**

3. You would **think** that if anyone could pull off **making all things right** it would be the one who unified everything in that day, right?

He had power, money, authority—people who believed in him—and proclaimed him **Lord**. But he didn’t. He couldn’t. God said through Daniel, 500 years earlier, that as powerful as this kingdom was, the coming Messiah would come out of nowhere—and knock it flat.

4. As you might know, **nowhere** would be a good description of where God started when it came to the coming of this Messiah who had been promised for **thousands** of years. You’d think that given the immensity of what was going on—the ruler of the universe, creator of all coming to this planet—that profound things would happen. The planetary system would stop—billions of angels would appear everywhere and hand out golden birth announcements. But it didn’t happen that way. God came secretly. Quietly.  
-The Bible says:

**In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!” Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” (Luke 1:26-33 NLT)**

-Nazareth was even more Podunk than Punxsutawney! And Mary was very young--probably somewhere between 13 and 16 years old at this time.

It’s like God never read any books on risk management! The whole brilliant plan gets narrowed down to this incredibly fine point—cells hidden—and multiplying in a young woman’s womb. Suddenly it was clear—now there were only 9 more months to wait.

-Other cultures and religions have claimed virgin births—impregnated by gods. But there’s always an elaborate story that sounds like something of out Dr. Seuss. Here—there’s no fanfare or explanation. Matthew writes:

**This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 NLT)**

-And a few verses later, Matthew says, “Oh, by the way, 700 years ago Isaiah *bold* us this would happen:

**All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” (Matthew 1:22-23 NLT).**

- C. You could call this the day the worlds collided—the world of earth with all its kingdoms, wealth, power and sparkle—and the Kingdom of Heaven, which seemed so *small* and insignificant in comparison that night Jesus was born.

God makes this profound entrance into history—and no one except a few really knew or cared. And in all of history—a tiny crack, barely observable to the naked eye, appeared. .

1. But then? More waiting. I imagine all the prophets like Isaiah and Daniel and David who prophesied such great things about the Messiah watching this whole thing happen from the grandstands of eternity—then scratching their chins and saying, “Hmmm! I *thought*...well, I thought it would be more...impressive!”

-And then his death—when *surely* one or two medium sized angels could’ve taken out the entire Roman army!

2. But *now*? We see the wonder of it all. When God splits something, like history, it’s more like seed in a granite cliff than a case of dynamite. It does the same thing—but *ver-ry slow-w-ly*. You have to wait. With Jesus’ coming? It was so small—and so slow—it was almost impossible to see things changing. But it *happened*—because, see, one day 2000 years ago, **God showed up as a baby.**

-That is the point of Christmas. Not that it’s a nice quaint story—and filled with wonderful traditions such as gift-giving and peace on earth and helping those in need. The *point* is that **God** gave His Son as a gift to us; this **Son** is God’s offer of peace and forgiveness and reconciliation. And in the process—God launched a kingdom.

One that is slowly but surely making *all* people, all relationships, and all things right! And so...we work with Him...and...we *wait*.

### III. IMMANUEL...IN THE WAITING ROOM

- A. Whenever you talk about Jesus splitting history in half, it almost raises as many questions as it answers, doesn't it? Wouldn't you think that **God** showing up would put an end to war and starvation and slavery and the unimaginable sorrow that goes on in the world?

-Yet, Jesus said that war and poverty and need would actually continue. And it has. The prophets of Jesus said that, in some cases, things would get worse. And they have. He said false prophets would go out in His Name—and actually use his Name to deceive others—and do horrible things. And they have—as in the Crusades, the Inquisition and Jonestown. Significant parts of this living, growing, changing organism called, **the Church**, got institutionalized into a religion—and when faith gets petrified—it's an awful thing.

-I think people have every right to ask, "If the point of Christmas is that Jesus is **Immanuel. God with us**, well, shouldn't everything be cleaned up by now—put back in order? And if Jesus is supposed to transform people—what do they seem to have this spotty history that includes the really **really** good—and the really, **really** bad?

1. To be honest, I don't have a lot of the answers to that—but I do have some thoughts. The fact that Jesus **didn't** fulfill everyone's expectations and clean up the world made it hard for his own people the Jews, to believe in Him. It didn't **fit**.

-What no one **ever** expected was that through his own suffering and death and resurrection, history would slowly shift—and the process of reconciliation would begin. And it would work—powerfully transforming people and whole institutions.

-He would actually leave His mission in the hands of His Followers and empower **us** to change the world, one person at a time. When we goof up and get it wrong, He doesn't step in a shove us out of the way. He's God—and He doesn't get stopped by goof-ups.

2. Know why the history of the Followers of Jesus is so spotty? Let me answer that with a question: How many of you have had a history that is pretty darn good and solid—up, up and **awa-a-ay!** Anyone? The history of Jesus' followers is spotty—because **my** history is spotty! And I'll bet yours is too! I've hurt people. There have been times when, because of my ignorance, I've believed and **taught** things that weren't quite right. Call me **Spot!** Not because I've made mistakes—I've sometimes done things I knew were wrong and destructive. Why? **I don't know!!**

-And still—God **waits**. Patiently. See, the deal is not that we're just waiting for God while He's off doing other stuff. He's waiting for **us!** And He waits for us because He's chosen to do his work through imperfect people—just like **every single person** on Matthew's list.

3. Here's the deal. Even after the long wait for the Messiah was over, humans found themselves—**still waiting**.

Jesus said, “Go tell everyone that the Kingdom of God is **here! Right now!** But for the completion of it all...? You have to wait.” Jesus said, “I’m going to complete history and bring an end to all the sadness and sorrow as we know it when I come again...but you have to wait.” Paul, the Apostle puts it like this:

**For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don’t need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don’t yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently. (Romans 8:22-25 NLT)**

-While God waits—people get quite critical of what He’s doing. It would be like watching a surgeon doing a heart by-pass operation.

It’s looks bloody and gruesome and painful. In fact, the patient looks more dead than alive—with his chest hanging open and his organs showing.” A little kid would walk in and say, “Hey mister! You’re killing my Dad!” But...you can’t pass judgment on the surgeon until the surgery’s over! Right?

- B. Speaking of surgery—there’s a place where family and friends go while it’s taking place. It’s kinda this holding tank for anxious people. It’s usually pretty stark—maybe a TV, or a few magazines to leaf through.

Not much laughter there—and sometimes a lot of sadness. And that place is called a....**waiting room**. I’ve been in a **lot** of waiting rooms—and I’ve never met anyone who wants to be there—unless it’s the owner of the vending machines.

-The reality of life is that the world is like this big waiting room—with lots of little waiting rooms in it. Let me tell you about some waiting room experiences—and I think you’ll be able to identify with what I’m saying.

\*In my second year of university I was dating a girl I thought I might marry. I deeply cared for her. But our lives seemed to be moving in two different directions. I was torn inside—I didn’t know what to do. I was in the waiting room—and it **hurt**.

\*Two years after Lori and I were married, we decided to start a family. We thought it would happen within months—a year at most. But it didn’t—and we were living in the fertile crescent—**everyone** was getting pregnant—even those who didn’t want to. We were **still** in the waiting room five years later.

\*About four and a half years ago, I met Karm and Cammie Amer in the waiting room of Sick Kid’s Hospital along with their family. The news was very grim. The best doctors in Canada had given their newborn daughter, Sydney, a devastating, hopeless diagnosis of advanced meningitis—and there appeared to be no future. The whole family literally agonized in the waiting room.

\*About 2 ½ years ago, I started into a process with my parents that seemed to be one waiting room after another. I received a call that my Dad, who was in the hospital for a heart procedure, had fallen—and had been life-flighted to a Pittsburgh Hospital with a brain hemorrhage. The next night he went into cardiac arrest—and then into a coma. So we sat in the waiting room. When he came out of the coma—I thought the waiting room was over—I had no idea of the kind of rehabilitation he'd need. Then we found out that my Mom had lung cancer—another waiting room. My Dad died—and my Mom was not getting better—another waiting room.

-Do you get the metaphor of the **waiting room**? You lose your job—and you're in the waiting room. That creates financial issues—and another waiting room. You get a call that one of your children has been arrested. The waiting room. A relationship hits a crisis—like a major blow-up, or chronic illness, or addiction, or betrayal. My point is that life, in some ways, is a series of waiting rooms.

-And that's the **amazing** thing about who Jesus is. The prophecies—and his entire life declared Him as--**Immanuel. God with us!** Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus promised, "All power and authority has been given to me—and **I will be with you—Immanuel—to the very end.** The question I want you to answer in your own heart is...is that enough for **your** waiting rooms? The prophecy about who this **Immanuel** would be is powerful. Let me read it for you again:

**For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. (Isaiah 9:6 NLT)**

1. I've found that the waiting rooms I've been in have been confusing. I'm in pain—sometimes in shock—and I'm anxious—cause I don't know **what** to do or where to turn.

I read about a pastor from Alabama some years ago who was being arrested for some reason—and **bit** the police officer on the finger! I thought, "Hey, **I've** felt like biting someone some days!"

-But it's not funny when you're in the waiting room, is it? There are decisions to make, your future is up for grabs—and you feel like you're lost, driving on a dark rainy night--and there's no center line down the highway.

-Wouldn't it be great to have someone like Dr. Phil with you all the time? **Get real...get smart...get going!** Well, Dr. Phil's a really smart guy, but when your wife asks, "Why did you say that?" you can't turn to him and say, "Go ahead, Phil. You're so smart—**you** answer her!" And that's okay—because the best counselor in the world, Jesus, **Wonderful Counselor**--has said, "You will **never** find yourself in a situation alone!"

-When you talk—He doesn't just wait for you to stop talking—He actually **listens**. And He understands. He knows what it's like to struggle—to be in pain.

-There's something else. He'll tell you the truth. Jesus is the most brilliant person who ever walked this planet—He's **God**—and He knows something Dr. Phil doesn't. He knows the future. And he knows you! In the waiting room of life—how would you like to have Jesus, this most amazing Counselor, as the One who sits by your side. God **with** us—a Counselor **with** us!

2. But sometimes, in the waiting room, it's not so much that we need **answers**. We've gotten the answer, some diagnosis, some decision of a judge or an employer. What we need is a breakthrough. We need power—either to kick down the walls of the situation we face, or inner power to handle the fall-out. We don't just need a Wonderful Counselor—we need a **Mighty God!**

-Friends, there are some areas where creativity helps. We can think up some good solid solutions—do a Gaant Chart, a Flow Chart and an Org Chart. But there are some waiting rooms where the doors are bolted—made of tungsten steel—and **only** a Mighty God can get through. What's amazing is that God works from the inside out. He softens hearts. He parts seas. He brings dead things—even dead relationships—back to life. He's **Mighty God**—and He's **in your corner**—because of Jesus.

3. There are some waiting rooms where you need a Dad. Some of you don't have good memories of a Dad. But good Dads—like the Everlasting Father—are **there** for you. They're strong when you're weak. They believe in you when you don't. They pray for you, and sometimes bail you out.

-Over these past two years, I've become aware of how profoundly I miss my Dad. When he was in the hospital, months before he died, a surgeon made a comment about him being old and sick. I had never thought of him like that—but He was.

-Jesus—as Everlasting Father—is a Dad who never gets old and sick, never moves away, never disowns you—and never leaves you. In the waiting rooms of life—when you need someone to hold you close, be strong when you're weak, advise you when you need the wisdom of experience—**He's there!** And **He's not goin' away!**

4. One more thing. Peace. In the waiting rooms—we need peace. This may just be me, but when I'm in the waiting room—any kind of waiting room—my mind is my worst enemy. I'm not necessarily thinking up solutions—my imagination is concocting worst-case scenarios. It's...**the urge to hyper-ventilate!** "What if...and **then...what if...**and **THEN, WHAT IF!!!!**"

-I need the **Prince of Peace**. I need someone who knows the future—who promises to guide me through it one step at a time, who promises me that his grace is sufficient for me—that His power is made perfect in weakness, that His arm will **always** be around my shoulder—even when I don't **feel** it there. And I need hope. That's what the Prince of Peace brings. Hope. Hope that He is at work in the hearts of people who hold my life or my future in their hands. Hope

that one day--maybe not here—maybe not *now*--but one day all the messes will not only make sense, but be made right.

-And when I call out—sometimes like a little kid crying for his Mom and Dad—I find out that He really is—*Immanuel*—God with me—right in my waiting room.

5. Want to know what happened in the waiting rooms I mentioned above?  
 \*The Holy Spirit's counsel on the girl I was dating was that I should break off the relationship. And I cried and agonized.  
 But it was one of the most critical decisions of my life—and ultimately led me in a whole new direction—and ultimately to Lori! And that was good!

\*And you would not believe what God was doing while Lori and I waited to conceive. God's plan was...*Kelly!* If you haven't met our oldest daughter—whom God miraculously—I'm not exaggerating—*miraculously* gave to us through adoption—you should! I can't begin to imagine our lives without her.

\*On that dreadful night in the Spring of 2004, Karm and Cammie and Lori and I left the waiting room and went to the chapel. When we prayed, I asked Cammie what she wanted me to pray for. She asked for the impossible—that Sydney would laugh and run and jump like all little girls. So we prayed—and we went to her room and committed her into God's hands. Right now, Sydney—in total defiance of everything the best tests and best doctors predicted—is laughing and running and jumping—probably back in Kid's Branch right this moment. She is a very bright, amazing, perfectly healthy little girl. God showed up!

\*As most of you know, when I came out of the waiting room with my parents—I came out *without* them. Within a year of his retirement from 55 years of ministry—my Dad died. And exactly 6 months later, my Mom died of cancer. My sister had her baby—and they moved. And a year later, Lori's Dad died. And these days we are finding out what it means to have Jesus, Prince of Peace, with us. And that's okay.

#### IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. We get so *tired* of waiting, don't we? I've never met a person who actually likes it! And yet, many times God is actually waiting for us. God in the waiting room. He's much more patient, of course. Peter, the leader of the early church actually says God holds up the final curtain on history—cause...He *waits*.  
**With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.**  
**(2 Peter 3:8-9 Msg)**

Interesting, isn't it—we think *we're* waiting for God. And actually, He's waiting for us. Looking for us. In fact, it could be that God has been calling your name for years—and He's waiting for you to come home.

Maybe He's waiting for you to grow into what He wants to do. Maybe He's waiting for you to believe that He actually is close—and offers Himself.

- B. I've found, over the years in the waiting rooms, that Jesus really did split history—and that He offers counsel, hope, power, comfort and peace. But, then, you'll have to find that out for yourself.