

The board said “landed” but nothing else. Did that mean landed but taxiing to the gate? Did that mean landed but waiting for a gate? What did that mean exactly? And how long would we wait to see the people we were picking up? The minutes passed. The board never changed. People started coming out the exit. Hugs were shared, handshakes were exchanged, and some passed alone. We waited, but our family never came. Finally we called. “Where were we?” they asked us. Where were we, where were they? Turns out we would’ve waited a long time because they somehow got below where the bags are picked up while we waited up by the security line.

Waiting for family you haven’t seen in a while is hard. Waiting for the oven to cook your food when you’re hungry is hard. Waiting for news after a surgery is hard. Almost all waiting seems hard. With God we’re asked to wait too. Maybe that’s even harder because of what’s been promised and what we know will happen. Maybe it’s easier because it’s been so long we don’t even think about it anymore. Either way, we wait.

Jeremiah is writing to people waiting. They’ve been promised capture and exile in a foreign country. So they’re waiting for that. But Jeremiah also promises they’ll be rescued from exile. So they’re waiting for that too. Those aren’t our promises, we’re waiting on others. The first lesson is all about waiting as we...

Wait for the critical coming of Jesus
To make his work complete
To make his people safe

I’m sure some of you use this discipline on your children. “We’ll do whatever after you’ve been quiet for a certain number of minutes. If you aren’t quiet I’ll just start the time over.” Not much quiets kids faster than having to be quiet to do something they want to do. But kids don’t have the best sense of time so it’s probably not more than a minute later when they ask, “Is it time yet?” They know the time is coming. For us the days are still coming. There are still things out there that God hasn’t fulfilled yet. That’s what makes the coming of Jesus so critical.

We’re not talking about the first time Jesus came. That’s over with. All the things he came to do he did. He finished that work. That coming the first time was critical because it means the second time is going to happen for sure. That second coming is still to happen, that’s what we wait for. There are things on that day that God has promised will absolutely happen. But it’s all still to come.

“Are you sure the time isn’t over? It seems like a long time.” That argument is used by every waiting child. What’s painful is their timeframe. Like kids, we expect God to operate in our timeframe and in our way. We get frustrated when that doesn’t happen. Ever wonder why God hasn’t allowed you to win the lottery? Or wonder why God hasn’t let you have children? Questioning why God is waiting so long to spare you some pain or bring about healing? We would take these things immediately. God makes us wait. To us things look unfinished and we don’t like it. We worry if God hasn’t gotten to them already, maybe he never will. God’s all knowing and all powerful. We figure what we want should happen. Then we question God’s sincerity. How much does he really care if this much time has passed? If you have these thoughts or ask these questions while waiting then falling away and sinning is easy.

Listen to Jeremiah the prophet. **“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.”** God’s promise to us is to fulfill his gracious promises. God declares it. More than just crossing his lips, God is determined he will do it without question. He will make good on his promises of grace. Some he has already. Jesus came once. Jesus did take away our sins. Those gracious promises are satisfied. Now the work he has left is guaranteed. Work of bringing us to the goal of our faith. Raising us from the dead, judging us by his grace alone, and separating us from all unbelievers. Our wait is for the critical coming of Jesus on the Last Day to make this work complete.

God’s not like you or me, making promises and then breaking them or promising everything and only delivering on some. God promises and then delivers on everything and then some. The Lord of free and faithful love promises and he will make his work complete. But it is still to come. **“In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line.”** Jesus came at just the right time and he will return at just the right time. So we wait for the critical coming of Jesus on the Last Day to make his work complete. There’s nothing to fear, only long for. We long for this day because it means completion of Christ’s work. It means everything we wait for in a resurrection and going to heaven will be made complete. Waiting for Christ’s coming is critical because he makes his work complete to us.

When the police arrive on a scene you know who’s in control. The police officers start their work, asking questions, crowd control, traffic control, and securing the scene. Even though they have this work to complete, the scene and the people are going to be safe too. When God arrives on the Last Day to our world he will have some work to complete. Its work he’s promised to do and it only can be done that day. But when God arrives that day we will also know that even though he’s got work to complete the people are safe. Safe because of the critical coming of Jesus.

Jeremiah was not safe while writing this book. He was under severe persecution because of his message. The people hated him because he told them they would be stripped of their land and taken captive. Jeremiah also told them they would be safe while in exile because God would still be their God. God would rescue them and bring them back to their homeland. In those days, when God arrived on the scene, people would be safe. They would be restored. They would be brought back.

Extended to the Last Day Jeremiah writes of God's return trip to the earth. In those days, when Jesus arrives on the scene God people's will be safe. God will rescue them and restore them. He will bring them to where they were planned to be all along. He would bring them safely to their true homeland, safe forever in heaven.

This earth is not anyone's final home. Yet we sure do work hard to make it feel like home. We wait so long we figure there's nothing to do but make the best of it and pretend this is actually our home. We force ourselves into believing that we need to control the temperature of the earth or we need to get just the right government and economic system. These will make this earth livable, even perfect. The world grabs our attention and we become convinced the world allows us to feel fully safe from everything. But we forget about God and the safety he promises.

Wait for the critical coming of Jesus. **"In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The Lord our Righteousness."** God will come in those days. Jesus will again show up physically on this earth. Then we'll know we're truly safe. We bear his name. He's called the Lord our Righteousness. He earned righteousness by living perfectly. That perfect life was given in a perfect payment on the cross. We're called by the same name. We're righteous because he is righteous. We're perfect and holy now and will be on that day because of Christ. God takes his promises seriously and he'll save us and bring us to safety. Jesus makes us safe in God's protection, forgiven of our sins, and looking forward to heaven.

Even now those promises, the promises of Jesus' second coming are right around the corner. They will be fulfilled. Of that we can be sure because God is the one who made them. We live today in safety with those promises. We have full access to God's throne because of Christ. We get the benefits of the perfection of Christ. That's something we don't have to wait for.

Whether it's waiting for a family member to come home after a long trip or waiting for the phone call from the doctor waiting can be hard. Especially hard is waiting for God's promises. They will come, but now we wait. We wait because when Christ comes he's going to come to make his work complete. And when Christ comes he will come to make his people safe. So today we wait for the critical coming of Christ.