

Waiting for Your Song

Psalm 40

The Psalms (no. 3 in the series)

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Peter Hiatt

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Transcript document prepared by: Michael Hanna (themichaelhanna@thesanctuarydowntown.org)

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Message

Psalm 40

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

This is a song to be sung by a choir, that was written by David—King David.

1 I waited . . .

[Peter pauses. For a long, long time.]

Don't you hate waiting? It just seems so wrong! Someone needs to do something! I hate waiting. And don't you especially hate waiting for a preacher who's making a point about waiting by purposefully waiting—you think to yourself: "*Get on with it, I understand the concept of waiting!*"

But waiting is more than a concept in the mind, it's like a helpless emptiness that you feel in your gut.

1 I waited patiently (literally: "I waited, waited" or "I waited and waited")

We don't know if David waited patiently; I especially hate waiting for patience!

- 1 I waited and waited for the Lord;
he inclined [to me] and heard my cry.**
- 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction,ⁱ
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.**
- 3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.**

Four times in the Psalms—five times in the Old Testament—we're literally commanded to "sing a new song." Two times David says that he sings a "new song."

Have you ever written a song? Vince has. So, at staff I asked him, “Vince, how do you do it? Where do new songs come from?”

Vince said, “Well it’s kind of weird, you don’t really write them... You, like, have to **wait** for them... cause, you get the sense they come from outside of you... something beyond you... that’s not you. You have to like get out of the way for that new song to happen.”

Last time we learned that you shouldn’t put your trust in Princes or Vinces, remember? I suspect that means that Vince can’t write your “new song” for you, but in order to write it you’ll probably have to wait for it just like Vince. I suspect the “new song” refers to anything creative that you might do...including a new you.

That’s the way it is with me and sermons—I’ll sit in my office all day crying out to God, reading books, banging my head on the desk...then all at once, ideas just drop into my brain.

Madeleine L’Engle wrote, “But when the words mean even more than the writer knew they meant, then the writer has been listening. And sometimes when we listen, we are led into places we do not expect, into adventures we do not always understand.”ⁱⁱ

In other words, to write a new song, you have to surrender control. And I think that’s why so many great songs seem to have been written by outcasts and slaves, or at least people who have truly suffered. To wait, is to suffer; it’s surrendering your will to that of another.

It wasn’t long ago that I started listening to the blues channel and realized that all my favorite songs hadn’t really been written by young white men like Elvis Presley, so much as old black men who sang the blues. Men who had suffered; men who’d been forced to wait.

I may be oversimplifying, but it does seem that the best art, and greatest music, comes from people like Beethoven who was going deaf, George Frederic Handel, who was destitute when he wrote *Messiah*, Vincent van Gogh, who wrestled with insanity, and Renoir, who was so crippled by arthritis that he had to tape the paintbrush to his hand to keep painting.

King David wrote most of the Psalms. But he wasn’t always king. He had been a shepherd, and after he became king, he often spoke like a slave.

For about a decade, as a young man, he lived as an outcast and outlaw, misunderstood, reviled, hunted by King Saul, and hiding in caves. Samuel the Prophet had anointed him and said he’d be king, but having experienced great victories, David had to suffer the most humiliating defeats, and wait and wait and wait and wait.

In his little biography of David, describing that time in his life, Gene Edwards writes:

He had less now than he had when he was a shepherd, for now he had no lyre, no sun, not even the company of sheep. The memories of the court had faded. David's greatest ambition now reached no higher than a shepherd's staff. Everything was being crushed out of him.

*He sang a great deal. And matched each note with a tear.
How strange, is it not, what suffering begets?*

There in those caves, drowned in the sorrow of his song, and in the song of his sorrow, David very simply became the greatest hymn writer, and the greatest comforter of broken hearts this world shall ever know.ⁱⁱⁱ

Well you've been commanded to sing a new song. In the Revelation the 144,000—who are a picture of us—sing a new song. They are those that have come out of the great tribulation.^{iv}

In Revelation 5, all creation sings a new song—it's the song of salvation.^v So, we each must sing a new song and yet all creation sings a new song. I suspect it's a symphony, of which your new song is an integral, unique, and irreplaceable part—you and you alone must sing it. Alone, but with the symphony.

In the beginning God spoke all things into existence...or maybe he sang, for he spoke his Logos, which means "meaning"—kind of like rhythm.

- In JRR Tolkien's *Silmarillion* God sings creation into existence.
- In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan the Lion does the same.
- In India people speak of God dancing the creation—a dance is the manifestation of a song, a rhythm or a logos.^{vi}
- According to some physicists all creation is like the vibration of meaning on superstrings vibrating in multiple dimensions.

If that's true, singing a new song must be like surrendering to the eternal song that constantly surrounds us, and in which we live move and have our being.^{vii} It must be less like mastering a trade and more like giving birth to a life—a life we did not create, but that creates us as we surrender to the song. When you sing the new song, someone else is singing you.

David said, "I waited," and in other Psalms, we're commanded to wait. I think all sin is a form of not waiting...for the Lord.

We get drunk; we attempt to lose our life in a bottle of wine, because we can't wait to lose our lives in the Spirit of our Lord. We fornicate, because we can't wait for the communion that is our God. We murder, because we can't wait for the righteousness that is Jesus.

We satiate our desires with every manner of sin, because we can't wait for the Lord, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.^{viii} We sin. Or worse yet, we invent religion. That may be the worst sin: instead of *waiting* for the Lord, we *pretend* that the things we do are the Lord. We fake Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith, and Self-control. We pretend that the Kingdom of God is something that we can manufacture with church budgets, classes and how-to workbooks. We teach classes on how to receive the Holy Spirit, when Jesus said, "Wait for the promise of the Spirit."

When you wait for a person, you refuse to do what that person will do...or you at least refuse to do it without them. To wait is to sacrifice your will to their will. Waiting is a sacrifice; so waiting is hard, and it often hurts. But if you never learn to wait, you never learn to love, and you trap yourself alone...in hell.

Spoiled children can't wait—and so they're utterly miserable. I used to buy my son a Hot Wheels car every time we went to Safeway. And one day I said, "No... not today, you'll need to wait." It's not because he was bad, but because I wanted him to know the Good. I wanted him to know that I am not an object that he can control; I am his father, who freely wills to love him.

At one point, Jesus healed the bodies of everyone he met (it was like getting a Hot Wheels every time you go to the store). Later, Jesus seemed to heal only some. And in the end, he wouldn't even heal himself... and yet, he was healing everyone... and everything.

In the garden he waited, and then, prayed, "Not my will but thy will be done." Then, on the tree He cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit."

He is the "root and the offspring of David." (Rev. 22:16)

David writes, "I waited..." and then,

- 3 **He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the Lord.**
- 4 **Blessed (Happy) is the man who makes
the Lord his trust,
who does not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after a lie!**
- 5 **You have multiplied, O Lord my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you!
I will proclaim and tell of them,
yet they are more than can be told.**
- 6 **In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,
but you have given me an open ear (literally: "ears you have dug for me").
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.**
- 7 **Then I said, "Behold, I have come;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:**
- 8 **I delight to do your will (*ratson*: pleasure), O my God;**

Sometimes in the Psalms it's helpful to stop and ask, "*Who's talking?*" Is this David or someone else?

- in the scroll of your book it is written of me:**
- 8 **I delight to do your [pleasure], O my God;
your law (*torah*) is within my heart (*me-ah*: gut, womb)**

It should be translated "in my gut or womb."

In Deuteronomy 17, God tells the Israelites that when they enter the land and desire a king, that king is to write the law in a book and keep it with him at all times. The law might refer to all the law, but it at least refers to God's law for kings, (in v. 16-17): The law that the king must not acquire too many riches for himself, and that his heart must not be lifted above his brothers. He must be a servant of all—even the slave of all.

Saul was the first King, but he was rejected for he wouldn't sacrifice to the Lord what God desired for him to sacrifice—he wouldn't sacrifice his own will to God's will.

David was the second King, and he waited on the Lord. He wasn't perfect, but he sacrificed his will to God's will. God had told Saul that this was the sacrifice He desired: obedience, which is Steadfast Love and Mercy, which in David looked like "a broken spirit and a contrite heart."^{ix}

Jesus is the last King, and Jesus sacrificed himself, fulfilling the entire law. He prayed, "not my will but thy will," which is utterly fascinating. For Jesus is the Logos, the Word, the Song and the Will of God...

- It's as if he numbered himself, identified himself, with us the transgressors.^x
- It's as if he sings the song of faith in Grace within us who have trapped ourselves alone in the illusion of our own sovereignty.
- It's as if he descends into our hell and helps us confess our sins and believe.
- As if he is God in us, willing and working for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).
- As if a good will in you, and a good work in you, is Jesus in you.

Well, God clearly instructs Israel to make sacrifices in the sanctuary, but here in verse 6, David, or someone, says: "In sacrifices and offerings, you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear." Literally translated it reads "ears you have dug for me." The translator changes it, to make sense of it, for us. But the psalm reads, "ears you have dug for me."

In Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 5, God gives instructions to masters of Hebrew slaves. In the seventh year they were to set them free, and liberally grant them gifts on which they could begin a new life. However, if a slave said, "I love my master and I want to serve my master," that is, "I want his will to be my will," then the master was instructed to place the slave's ear against the doorpost and, with an awl, bore a hole in his ear. This was a sign to everyone: This slave delights to do his master's will; it is his pleasure.

Now think about that. If a slave truly delights to do his Master's will, is that slave in bondage, or is that slave free? Jesus only did what he saw his father doing, and he took the form of a slave. Was there ever a person more free than Jesus, the slave of all?

Now check this out: the author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:6-8 but with some utterly fascinating twists. This is Hebrews 10:5-7:

... when Christ (literally "He") came into the world ...

When did "He," that is the Word of God, come into the world? The Word of God has been coming into the world from the beginning, even if his coming wasn't made manifest until about 0 or 30 AD.

**... when Christ (literally "He") came into the world, he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me ..."**

Instead of saying "ears you have dug for me," he says, "a body have you prepared for me."^{xi} This was also an ancient Greek translation of the text; it's what some ancient Greeks thought, "ears you have dug for me," really meant. But it's also what Jesus thinks it really means, for

**... he said,
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;**

- 6 **in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.**
- 7 **Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'**

"A body you have prepared for me..."

What body is he talking about?

1. Well it would at least be that body he walked around in along about 33 AD, when he prayed "not my will, but thine be done," and then offered himself as the perfect sacrifice on the tree.
2. But it must also be David's body, because Jesus, the Will, Word, and Song of God is speaking through David in Psalm 40 along about 1000BC. And Jesus told us in the Revelation, "I am the root and fruit of David."
3. It's David's body, but *we* are also Christ's Body. And Christ is our "Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption."^{xii} A good free will in us is Christ at work in us. We are his body, his temple, his bride.
4. It's us, and apparently, all humanity and maybe even all creation. For as Paul wrote, this is "[the] plan for the fullness of time, to unite [*anakephalaio*: to bring together under one head] all things in him."^{xiii}
5. In the Revelation we saw, "all creatures in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them" praising the God the Father and the Lamb on the throne. Revelation 5:9 They sing a new song, saying "*worthy are you...*"

The old song is, "*I'm trying really hard to be worthy...*"

The new song is, "*Worthy are you...*"

The old song is "*We are salvation.*"

The new song is "*Yahweh is salvation,*" *Yehoshua*, that is, "Jesus!"

Heaven is a symphony of songs all to the tune of *Yehoshua*, Jesus. Untold billions of songs all to the tune of absolute, eternal, and amazing Grace. Heaven is a symphony of songs, just as a living body is a symphony of sacrifice.

For what is a living body?

- It's one molecule sacrificing its autonomy for another.
- It's one cell sacrificing its will for the will of another, or of all. That's why you're not a sack of amoebas or protozoa, but you're a man or a woman constructed with a symphony of cells.
- A living body is one body part sacrificing for another body part and for all—it's each body part losing its life and finding it; in other words, bleeding.

Heaven is a symphony of songs, just as a living body is a symphony of sacrifice... sacrifice to God, who is Love. "In this is Love," writes John, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins..."^{xiv}

When one person sacrifices it looks like a man crucified on a tree. When two people sacrifice it looks like a great marriage. When all people sacrifice it is a "great congregation." It is the Body of Christ. It is the Kingdom of Heaven.

We all want heaven, but we're terrified of sacrifice. We don't believe that on the other side of the flaming sword, the consuming fire, the veil, and the judgment seat is the new creation. What

happened to the bulls, sheep, goats and even Canaanites and Amalekites that were sacrificed to Yahweh?

Revelation 21:5 “Look I make all things new,” says the Word of God.

God told Saul and David, look I don’t need sheep and goats—they are all mine anyway.^{xv} I don’t need sheep and goats; I need you to surrender sheep and goats. I want you to sacrifice your will to my will. As Paul writes, “Present yourself a living sacrifice . . .”

We all want heaven, but we’re terrified to sacrifice; we’re terrified to lose our lives and find them. We all want heaven, but we’re terrified of Love...who is God.

Jesus is the Word of God, Song of God, and the Will of God, the Will to Love. And Love “binds everything together”^{xvi} in a Great Congregation, the Kingdom of Heaven. And Heaven is Happy.

**8 I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart (gut)."**

**9 I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
behold, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O Lord.**

David is singing the new song in 1000 BC

**10 I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.**

Why would David be tempted to conceal the new song of salvation? Well you know: it’s “the offense of the Gospel.” Nothing is as offensive to all our old songs as the new song. Nothing is as offensive to human flesh as the song of Grace. And yet, David sings it. He sings it to the great congregation; he sings it to everybody, for everybody is actually one body, whether they know it or not. God is not just healing your body; he’s healing everybody, for we are all one body—and to do that we must each learn a new song.^{xvii}

**11 As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain
your mercy from me;
your steadfast love and your faithfulness will
ever preserve me!**

**12 For evils have encompassed me
beyond number;
my iniquities have overtaken me,
and I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head;
my heart fails me.**

See? David isn’t singing to his own Glory—that’s the old song. David is singing to God’s Glory—that’s Jesus. David is singing his new song, and The New Song.

- 13 **Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me!
O Lord, make haste to help (ezer) me!**

(Check it out: David is an *adam*, who's found his "helper.")

- 14 **Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether
who seek to snatch away my life;
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who delight in my hurt!**
- 15 **Let those be appalled because of their shame
who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"**
- 16 **But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation
say continually, "Great is the Lord!"**
- 17 **As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help (ezer) and my deliverer (savior);
do not delay, O my God!**

The new you is a new song, and Heaven is a symphony of new songs. But to sing the new song...you must learn to wait.

[Audio clip: musicians in an orchestra, talking, shuffling around,
and warming up their instruments.]

You know what that sound is? That's the sound of musicians in an orchestra not waiting. That's the sound of each person tooting their own horn, whenever they want to toot it. We often, and rather foolishly, refer to that as freedom.

This is the sound of musicians in an orchestra waiting to toot their own horn. This the sound of musicians sacrificing their will to the will of the conductor. This is Beauty, Freedom, and Life:

[Video clip: a large orchestra performing part of the first movement of
Beethoven's Fifth, the *Schicksals-Sinfonie* (Symphony of Destiny)]

See? Heaven is like that second sound. And yet the first sound gave birth to the second sound—it was the sound of an orchestra tuning their instruments so they could play the symphony. Tuning an instrument is learning what notes to not play.

See? this fallen world is like that first sound. Evil is a lack of harmony with the Word, and sin is not waiting to toot your own horn. Yet even the sin and evil make you long for the Good, so you might freely choose to play the music—that is sing the new song.

The New Song and your song—which is what you alone can sing, for you alone know when, where, and how to sing it, for the conductor lives in the sanctuary of your soul.

"I waited and waited for the Lord . . . and he put a new song in my mouth," writes David.

You're not waiting for the train, as if the Lord were a machine. You're not waiting for a healing, as if the Lord were a bottle of aspirin. You're not even waiting for instructions, as if the Lord were some sort of formula or law. You're waiting for the Lover of your soul and we don't know exactly what he'll do, except that it will be Good and it will be absolute Grace.

People always want to know:

- How do I save my marriage?
- How do I heal the sick?
- How do I speak in tongues and evangelize the world?
- How do I get God to work for me?

You don't. He's not your totem—remember? He's not your totem; but you are his Temple.

The Greeks had a legend that Amphion, a Son of Zeus, built Thebes by playing his lyre—he played music so beautiful, that it became incarnate, in the stones, and those living stones danced into place. That's not actually how Thebes was built, but it is how Jerusalem is built. God sings a song that becomes incarnate in the body of his Son. Then we become that very body—the living stones that form a city, that is a temple, that is a body and a bride. A dancing bride.

“So, what do I do?” you ask. Well, you wait...

Your entire life in this world is waiting. Yet even in this world the song will sometimes manifest in a sign or a wonder, but it will always manifest as a work of Love.

Worship is waiting, the Sabbath is waiting, prayer is waiting, meditation is waiting, Faith and Hope are waiting for Love... and in this is Love.

Communion

On that night he took bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you.
And he took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood.

Psalm 40:8 “Your Torah, your Way, your Logos, your Song, is in my gut.”

So come to the table, put the Song in your gut, and allow the Lord to put a new song in your mouth.

Benediction

And so David writes, “I waited and waited and the Lord put a new song in my mouth.”
Wouldn't you like to know the situation in which David waited? And what exactly happened when the new song came?

But he doesn't tell us. It's enough for you to know that you wait. We all wait, and it's the Lord that puts the new song in our mouth.

At the end of the Psalm, David is still waiting. He says, “do not delay, O Lord.”

“Wait for the Lord...”

And yet, he’s here isn’t he? So, what do we mean? I think we mean that we’re waiting for him to do something. And yet, he’s doing everything all the time.

So, I think we might mean that we’re waiting for him to do something that would break the illusion of our own sovereignty. And yet, if that were to truly happen, I think we might try to crucify him. Or we might just burn up in a puff of smoke.

So what does he do? He manifests in miracles here and there, a sign or a wonder, a sunset, a flower, your neighbor, you sing a little bit.

But maybe it’s not really us that’s doing most of the waiting. I suspect that he’s waiting for us. He’s waiting for us to wait for him in the deepest darkest corners of our soul. He’s waiting for us to say, *“Come Lord Jesus,”* and actually...mean it.

So, believe the Gospel and wait. And you will sing a new song.

Endnotes

ⁱ “The pit of destruction” possibly a synonym for *Sheol*, a word that was often translated as “hell” in the King James Version (although David does not use the word *Sheol* in Psalm 40).

ⁱⁱ Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980), p. 22

Plato spoke of the necessity for divine madness in a poet. It is a frightening thing to open oneself to this strange and dark side of the divine; it means letting go of our sane self-control, that control which gives us the illusion of safety. But safety is only an illusion, and letting it go is part of listening to the silence, and to the Spirit...

The moment of inspiration does not come to someone who lolls around expecting the gift to be free. It is no giveaway. It is the pearl for which we have to pay a great price, the price of intense loneliness, the price of that vulnerability which often allows us to be hurt...

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ⁱⁱⁱ Gene Edwards, *A Tale of Three Kings*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1980), p. 27-28

^{iv} Revelation 7:14 and 14:3

^v Rev. 5:9-14

^{vi} *Hindu India developed a magnificent image to describe God's relationship with creation. God "dances" creation. He is the dancer, creation is his dance. The dance is different from the dancer; yet it has no existence apart from him. You cannot take it home in a box if it pleases you. The moment the dancer stops, the dance ceases to be.*

In our quest for God, we think too much, reflect too much, talk too much. Even when we look at this dance that we call creation, we are the whole time thinking, talking (to ourselves and others), reflecting, analyzing, philosophizing. Words. Noise.

Be silent and contemplate the dance. Just look: a star, a flower, a fading leaf, a bird, a stone . . . any fragment of the dance will do. Look. Listen. Smell. Touch. Taste. And, hopefully, it won't be long before you see him - the dancer himself!

-Anthony DeMello, *Anthony DeMello, Writings selected by William Dych, S.J.* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 46-47

^{vii} Acts 17:28

^{viii} Psalm 16:11

^{ix} Psalm 51:17, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13... see also Psalm 50:12-14. 1 Samuel 15:7-24 recounts God's rejection of Saul as King. Saul was commanded to offer the Amalekites and all their possessions as "*cherem*." That's often translated "devote to destruction." But the word means something like "sacred offering." God doesn't "despise" the sacred offering; He desires it. It includes the Amalekites who will be judged and redeemed. And it includes their sheep. Saul was happy to kill the people, for he despised them. But he keeps the sheep (and the king of the Amalekites) for himself.

^x Isaiah 53:12

^{xi} "A body you have prepared for me" is also the way one version of the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) translates "ears you have dug for me." Just as we translate the confusing Hebrew phrase to read "you have given me an open ear," so the ancient translators translated it "A body you have prepared for me." "A body you have prepared for me," "open ears you have given me," and "Ears you have dug for me," are all true and ultimately mean the same thing: The faithful obedience of the Body of Christ.

^{xii} 1 Cor. 1:30 RSV

^{xiii} Eph. 1:10

^{xiv} 1 John 4:10 NIV

^{xv} 1 Samuel 15, Psalm 50:7-15

^{xvi} Col. 3:14

^{xvii} We must each learn our place and function in that body, but even more we must learn the joy of sacrificing—of loving and being loved—for that body.