

“Wine And Wait”  
Psalm 62:5-12  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20

We have gathered this Third Sunday after Epiphany to remember the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12). My friends, if you believe in Jesus and are not of Jewish ethnicity, you are a Gentile, and the good news of Jesus has been made known to you. God’s focus is on human, particularly our response to God’s claim on our lives.

God’s grace is universal and not reserved for Christians alone. God will always respond to any and all, who repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord with salvific grace.

According to the authors of the book *America’s Four Gods*, Americans differ widely from one another on two key areas of belief about God: (1) the level of God’s engagement in our world, and (2) the extent of God’s judgment of evildoers.

In other words, is God actively and meticulously engaged in what happens in your life and in your world? Or is he distant, remote, uncaring? And secondly, does God judge wrongdoers in this life? Or is God only kind, forgiving, and helpful to people in need?

Based on those two differences, the authors say that Americans divide into four major understandings of God.

First is the *Authoritative God*. The Authoritative God is very involved in the world to help people and does judge evildoers in this life. Even so, he is loving, and is seen as a Father figure.

Second is the *Benevolent God*. The Benevolent God is very involved in this world to help people but does not feel anger toward evildoers and does not judge anyone.

Third is the *Critical God*. The Critical God does not involve himself in the affairs of this world or its people, but he does take careful note of how people live and will judge them in the afterlife, holding them to account for evils done.

Fourth is the *Distant God*. The Distant God is more a cosmic force or Higher Power than a person. This God created everything but is no longer engaged with the world and does not judge its inhabitants.

...our beliefs about God affect our beliefs and values about morality, society, science, money and possessions, evil, warfare, and the culture wars.<sup>1</sup>

In Jesus Christ we are unreservedly accepted and infinitely loved.

Vaclav Havel, a former president of the Czech Republic, poses the question, “What indeed could change the tendencies of today’s civilizations?”<sup>2</sup> He writes, “It is my deep conviction that the only option is a change in the sphere of the spirit, in the sphere of human conscience, in the actual attitude of man toward the world. It is not enough to invent new machines, new regulations, or new institutions. We must understand differently and more perfectly the true purpose of our existence on this earth.”<sup>3</sup> My friends, we need a change in spirit and an understanding of the purpose of our existence on earth.

The statement *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*,<sup>4</sup> is an important theological affirmation made by the Reformed tradition in which this church stands. God is authoritative, benevolent, critical, and distant; portions of each of these understandings of God are true. It is in that tension that human is to stand, respond, and live. Augustine writes in *Confessions* that we are made for God. And with that being the

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<sup>1</sup>Craig Brian Larson, editor of *PreachingToday.com*; source: Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, *America’s Four Gods* (Oxford, 2010).

<sup>2</sup>*Civilization*, April/May 1998, 52.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>The Latin is translated, “The Church reformed always being reformed according to the Word of God.”

biblical witness “our hearts are restless until they find rest in you [God].”<sup>5</sup> It is true that we are truly not content until our being finds rest in God. That process is lifelong and requires patience and endurance. In this regard, Pastor, Author (*Crushing: God Turns Pressure into Power*) and Speaker T. D. Jakes writes,

So, after crushing us, God exercises His [God’s] grace by allowing us to ferment in the supposed stillness of transition so that we might be ready for the next stage...I thank God for hiding me and releasing me when He was ready instead of when I was still fermenting...His [God’s] timing rarely seems to match our impatience, but we must learn to release haste in order to experience taste.<sup>6</sup>

During times of ferment, we must trust God’s timing by practicing patience.

Psalm 62:5-12, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 and Mark 1:14-20 declare that confidence trust and assurance in life are ultimately found in and through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 62:5-12 proclaims that God acts in God’s time and in God’s way. Psalm 62:5, “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.”

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 references that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is meant to inform how we live now in the remaining days of our lives. 1 Corinthians 7:31 reads, “...For the present form of this world is passing away.”

Mark 1:14-20 shows us that Jesus called his disciples to an experience. Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee. He found Simon and Andrew, James, and John. They were fishermen. They were not from the religious elite. They were common and ordinary people. Notice three words: “come”, “follow,” and “make.” Each is an imperative. Come

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<sup>5</sup>Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, translated by J.G. Pilkington (Edinburgh: The folio Society Ltd, 1993), 13.

<sup>6</sup>T. D. Jakes, *Crushing* (New York City, New York: FaithWords, 2019), 157 and 164.

to Jesus. Follow Jesus. Make disciples of Jesus. Mark 1:15 reads, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”<sup>7</sup>

One of the paradoxes of Scripture is that if a person seeks to save their life, they will lose it. But, if one loses it, they will find it. Vaclav Havel was right when he said that it will take a change in the sphere of the spirit, a change in the actual attitude of human toward the world in order for there to be a change in the direction of humanity and civilization. An experience with Jesus is that change in the sphere of the spirit, a change in the actual attitude of human toward the world. Again, T. D. Jakes writes, “God’s blessings become reality in our lives when we rejoin the Master’s plan by lining up with it in faith...When we reconnect with God, we step into what He [God] has for us.”<sup>8</sup> Radicalism nor compromise are sufficient responses for people “called to follow the way God has provided in the form of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Let God shape you in your suffering, your crushings and times of fermenting. Be confident. Trust Jesus. Be assured that you are beloved of God. Come to Jesus. Wait. Follow Jesus. Wait. Make disciples of Jesus. Wait. Love God and others. You’re becoming a fine wine. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 24 January 2021  
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<sup>7</sup>In the three paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of John W. Wurster, Alvin Padilla, Michael Pasquarello III, John Byron and Erin Dufault-Hunter in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume I* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 203-204, 205-207, 207-208, 209-211 and 211-213.

<sup>8</sup>T. D. Jakes, *Crushing*, 138.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Pasquarello III in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume I*, 208.