



*Pastor Heidi Billington*

*Smythe Street Church | May 10, 2020*

## Mother's Day Video

### SLIDE 1:

#### Preparation in the Waiting

ME:

#### In Honour of Moms Everywhere - Happy Mother's Day!

I thought I'd just bring it to you as real as it gets these days and preach in my housecoat, slouched on a couch and raise a DQ Wonder Woman blizzard to you today! But that might be a tad uncomfortable, so instead...

Moms, if you need permission (and many of us do) to take a day, or even an hour and do NOTHING, please consider this permission granted!

Truthfully, I count it an absolute privilege to get to invade your homes today and share with you something I am directly in the throws of learning myself.

#### LET'S PRAY.

As the Pastors discussed the theme of our last few weeks together, "In the Waiting", Pastor Chad realized as he prepared for the sermon on April 19<sup>th</sup> that it has been exactly 40 days since Covid19 made a serious invasion into our daily living.

As we were discussing the connection points of this coincidence, my mind rushed back to last summer when my friend and I were floating in her pool. It was a warm and sunny day, much like yesterday... just joking.... It had nothing to do with Covid19 but we were talking about all the 40's in the Bible and my upcoming 40<sup>th</sup> birthday this past Christmas. Who knew the pool was a place for such in-depth conversation right?

**You see 40 is a really key number in the Bible, and often, symbolic of a time where God's people rediscover their faith.** My friend was suggesting that my 40<sup>th</sup> year of living might also be a significant time in my own life. **A time where theology and life experience were settling into a deeper faith as well.**

SLIDE 2:

**40: Symbolic of a time where God's people rediscover their faith.**

Let's just pause here for just a second as we recap some of the iconic 40s in the Bible. We think of **Noah and the Flood**<sup>1</sup>, **Moses at Mt. Sinai**<sup>2</sup>, the **Israelites in the Dessert**<sup>3</sup>, **Elijah at Mt. Horeb**<sup>4</sup>, **Jonah in Nineveh**<sup>5</sup>, **Jesus in the Dessert**<sup>6</sup>, the days **between Jesus' Resurrection from the dead and his Ascension into heaven**. 40 matters. (I'm sure someone has, but what a fun book that would be to write!)

For those of you who are following us through the "In the Waiting" series, Pastor Chad kicked the series off with a timely message from **1 Kings 19**. He pointed out that although Elijah had just personally spoke to and witnessed the power of God in this larger than life experience with fire and water, shortly thereafter, in his humanity, he fled for his life in fear and needed to know that God was with him.

### SLIDE 3:

When Elijah was afraid God didn't condemn him. God sustained him.

For those of us who are faith-filled but still struggle with fear, doubt, anxiety, insecurity, this was a reminder of God's quiet presence with us in uncertain times.

The following week, April 26<sup>th</sup>, Pastor Chad came back to us with the story of Moses on Mt. Sinai. While the Israelites, God's chosen people, waited for Moses to return from collecting the Ten Commandments in a visitation from God, pressures and tensions mounted and they made idols to worship. We don't have to go far to see ourselves in this situation.

### SLIDE 4:

When we are under pressure the best and worst come out of us as well.

Pastor Chad challenged us not to shy away from what we see in ourselves in these times but

1. Own it
2. Accept the consequences
3. Ask for forgiveness

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 7 & 8

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 19-32

<sup>3</sup> Numbers

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 19

<sup>5</sup> Jonah

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 4:1-11

Finally last week, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pastor Verner took us to the 40 days Jesus spent with the disciples after his resurrection where he explained his teachings. They understood their purposes and he challenged them to take the Gospel to the highways and byways, telling all people the good news of Jesus.

Pastor Verner reminded us that...

### **SLIDE 5:**

**Our greatest God-given opportunities are found in our greatest moments of crisis.**

And asked us to consider:

1. Are you ready to look around for those opportunities?

### **WE:**

As we look towards Mother's Day, as a Mom of 4 myself, it wasn't lost on me that Moms are all very aware of a significant #40 in the maternity world. 40 weeks of pregnancy. Now truth be told, those 40 weeks if you're unfortunate, can sometimes turn into 42 trillion weeks, or possibly 32 or 36 or... regardless, those weekly updated emails where they compare your baby to the size of a fruit will be coming for 40 weeks.

Here's the thing: PREGNANCY and PREPARATION go hand in hand.

### **SLIDE 6:**

**40 weeks: Pregnancy and Preparation go hand in hand.**

### **TRANSITION:**

I'll be honest, when Chad and I first found out I was pregnant with #1, ok, and #2 - we are slow learners - we were pretty shell-shocked. We'd find ourselves muttering around the house, "How did this happen?" and I remember one distinct phone call where I was lying on the couch staring at my growing belly and I said to my friend "It's just like, like **"Alien<sup>7</sup>"** the movie. There is this thing growing inside of me, eating off of my body...."

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<sup>7</sup> *Alien* is a 1979 [science-fiction horror film](#) directed by [Ridley Scott](#) and written by [Dan O'Bannon](#).

Sure, not your classic, “yay I’m pregnant” story, and I’ve never watched any Alien movies, so I may have made that image up altogether, but the point is the same.

**Chad and I needed the preparation time.**

Now before some of you tune me out because you’ve never been pregnant, I think there is something in this for all of us today. Moms feel it sharp in their hearts on Mother’s Day, **but all of us have been in a time of waiting and preparation.**

So, let’s hop over to the book of **Genesis**, an easy book to find in our Bibles as it is the very first one - called **Genesis for “the Beginning”**. As I’d remind our SSC kids, the Bible is like a big Binder with lots of different dividers in it. **Dividers for history and poetry, love stories, genealogy and letters** – literally there is something for everyone.

Perhaps it was the status of my own inept housekeeping while a 6, 8, 10 and 12-year-old and 4-year old dog tear it up daily in muddy spring, but as I was praying about today, God brought one of the biggest, most intense **“STAY AT HOME”** stories to mind - specifically Noah. So, let’s head over to **Genesis and Chapter 8.**

I want you to try to remove the cute **Fisher Price set of Noah’s Arc** that popped up in your mind’s eye, or the painting on your baby’s nursery wall with 2 of every colourful animal and a gigantic door that opens for them and a beautiful rainbow arching over the boat.

I’m not going to take time today to talk about how the world was evil and immoral and God brought destruction upon it, and I absolutely do not want you to hear what I am not saying. **I do not believe Covid19 is God lashing out against a corrupt society nor is it a sign of the end times.** If you’re interested, Pastor Verner did an excellent job of addressing this in his **Easter Sunday sermon on April 12<sup>th</sup>.** Please check that out on our website.

**SLIDE 7:**

**[www.ssc.church](http://www.ssc.church)**

But here is some back story in a nutshell. The earth and its people were corrupt and God saw that Noah alone was not. God gave Noah specific directions, that even though there had never before been rain on the earth, he was to build a gigantic boat for 2 of every animal and insect (even June bugs?) and Noah’s family. After the ark was built and the animals and Noah’s family safely inside, God shut the door and **rain and floods came for 40 days.**

So here's the thing...

I don't know about you, but I want to know HOW 8 people, a billion insects and animals lived in one space for over a year? I mean sure, there's bound to be a game of Skip-Bo<sup>8</sup> or two, and a run around the animal stalls every day but that's **a lot of "togetherness" with nowhere to go.**

**GOD:**

Here's where we're going today...

And sometimes we gloss over this in Sunday School lessons. You know, we have the craft page with Noah and the window flap and the dove on the popsicle stick with the olive leaf in its beak and the cotton ball clouds with the brightly coloured rainbow in the background—can you tell I love kids ministry?—and we miss the heartbreak, devastation, frustration, tension, and worry in their period of waiting.

**SLIDE 8:**

**Genesis 8:1** "But God remembered Noah."

And because...

**SLIDE 9:**

**God Remembered Noah. God Remembers You.**

And this, my friends, makes all the difference.

Let's keep reading in Genesis 8.

**SLIDE 10:**

**Genesis 8:1-14 But God remembered Noah** and all the wild animals in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. He sent a wind to blow across the waters, and the floods began to disappear. <sup>2</sup> the underground water sources ceased their gushing and the torrential rains stopped.

**SLIDE 11:**

<sup>3</sup> So the flood gradually began to recede. **After 150 days,<sup>4</sup> exactly five months from the time the flood began,<sup>[a]</sup>** the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup> **Two and a half months later,<sup>[b]</sup>** as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks began to appear.

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<sup>8</sup> SkipBo Card Game by Mattel

**SLIDE 12:**

**6 After another forty days**, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat **7** and released a raven that flew back and forth until the earth was dry. **8** Then he sent out a dove to see if it could find dry ground. **9** But the dove found no place to land because the water was still too high.

**SLIDE 13:**

So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside.**10 Seven days later**, Noah released the dove again. **11** This time, toward evening, the bird returned to him with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Noah knew that the water was almost gone.

**SLIDE 14:**

**12 A week later**, he released the dove again, and this time it did not come back.

**13** Finally, when Noah was 601 years old, **ten and a half months after the flood began**,<sup>[c]</sup> **Noah lifted back the cover to look**. **14 Two more months went by**,<sup>[d]</sup> and at last the earth was dry!

Now I don't know about you, but don't you find yourself wondering:

- How did they cope when they heard their friends and community members dying and they couldn't go to them?
- How did they manage their anxiety when there was an uneasy quiet after the storm?
- What guilt did they wrestle with while they were safe "at home" protected from harm?
- What relationship issues rose to the surface with the ones they loved the most after months alone together?

- How did they cope with hopes dashed when Noah sent out a dove to see if they could possibly go outside again?

Sound a little familiar? Like waiting for that update at 2:30 every day, or the one that comes at the end of each week before the weekend?

Do you just feel for Noah a little when you read “**Noah lifted back the cover to look.**” **AGAIN. 12 months later?**

### SLIDE 15:

#### God Remembered Noah. God Remembers You.

Did you know that God remembers you? Even in the waiting.

- He remembers you as you struggle to make your finances work.
- He remembers you as you make that unanswered call to your estranged daughter.
- He remembers you as you grieve the loss of a loved one.
- He remembers you as you attempt to homeschool while working from home and managing a household.

### YOU:

**But what if we are able to look at this time of waiting as time of preparation? What if you trusted this time to God and asked him to prepare you for what is coming?**

Now I get that this is extremely hard to do and easier said than done, but it's an **intentional posture.**

Maybe it's time for you to face your sin, **your separation** from God. I can't let this Sunday go and not tell you, hard core, no skirting around it, just like me, you need to face your wrong doings. You need to ask God to forgive you. You need to give him control of your life. You need to put your dependency in Him and not yourself. Wouldn't now be the best time when we are face to face with just how little we can control?

What if it was here, in the waiting, you know, 40 days after the flood began, **that you learned to really see your sin and your need?** Like your body stretching and growing to accommodate the child growing inside of you. Sure it can be painful, but **there's also nothing quite like witnessing the growth of new life inside you.**



**\*\*Just last week, 7 weeks into Covid19 isolation and days of my 6-year old standing for no apparent reason and screaming at the top of her lungs several times a day, rather than just be frustrated or google solutions or complain, I crawled in bed beside her while she slept, wrapped my arms around her and prayed with gigantic tears that God would give her peace and comfort. Just last week. Why did it take me that long to go to Him with this?**

**What if it was here, in the waiting, 5 months after the flood began, that you really learned to grieve? To find ways to identify your hurt or your struggle, to express your need to your safe people and reach out for help?**

**\*\*Just last week, 7 weeks into Covid19 isolation, I was forced to stare some of my dependencies other than Jesus, straight in the face. I had a hard time identifying my hurt and my struggle. I struggled to express my confusion and need and reach out for help, but man Covid19 has shone a light on my brokenness. So, what am I going to do with it?**

Am I tracking with you today? I don't think I'm alone in this.

**But what if it was here, in the waiting, another 2 and a half months after the flood, that you experienced that first butterfly sensation of new life, real love and laughter, joy despite circumstances and awareness of the blessings He's placed in your life?**

**Like that relationship you've taken for granted? Like the joy of turning all your devices off and really truly being with people? Giving or receiving a real hug? What it feels like to pour out your greatest needs to God and watch as He answers your prayers and provides for you in ways you never could have expected?**

**What if it was here, in the waiting, that you didn't deny or push away or ignore any of these changes, but found a way to truly trust him, and trust him again, and give it to him and trust him again and maybe even stand in a bit of awe as you watch the changes unfold in front of you?**

Andy Stanley recently preached some hard truth in a message entitled “Calm in the Storm”. He said:

**SLIDE 16**

Faith is a version of Fear. ~Andy Stanley. <sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the biggest part in allowing God to use our time of waiting as a time of preparation is not in denying or idolizing our fears, our need, our insecurities, but in answering the question “What am I so afraid of?” Am I more afraid of the storm, Covid19, my dependencies, myself, or am I more afraid of God? Can I trust that God who loves me, offers me mercy and grace, is for me, gives me a promise? I need to fear him above all else. Yes, **Faith is a version of Fear.**

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul pleads Jesus’s followers

**SLIDE 17:**

**Romans 12:1-2** And so, dear brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.<sup>[b]</sup>

**SLIDE 18:**

**2** Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

What if instead of scrolling through our news feeds, or eating that second row of Oreos, we asked God “Will you remember me? Will you teach me to trust you with this? Will you grow my faith? Will you transform me into a new person by changing the way I think? Will you show me your will? Will you give me a promise?”

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<sup>9</sup> [https://store.northpoint.org/pages/calm-in-the-storm-by-andy-stanley?utm\\_campaign=Andy%20Video%20Devotion%20-%20Calm%20In%20The%20Storm%20%28W7SCDL%29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=FOR%20Book%20Join%20the%20Discussion&\\_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJoZWlkaS5iaWxsaW5ndG9uQGdtYWlsLmNvbSIsICJrbF9jb21wYW55X2lkjoglkxxUDJEZyJ9](https://store.northpoint.org/pages/calm-in-the-storm-by-andy-stanley?utm_campaign=Andy%20Video%20Devotion%20-%20Calm%20In%20The%20Storm%20%28W7SCDL%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=FOR%20Book%20Join%20the%20Discussion&_ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJoZWlkaS5iaWxsaW5ndG9uQGdtYWlsLmNvbSIsICJrbF9jb21wYW55X2lkjoglkxxUDJEZyJ9)

**SLIDE 19:**

**Let this Preparation be a Promise**

Pregnancy and Preparation both start with the world P but so does Promise.

**Will you choose to trust him with your time of preparation? In your time of waiting?**

What does he promise us?

**SLIDE 20:**

**1 Corinthians 2:9**

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
and no mind has imagined  
what God has prepared  
for those who love him." [a]

Like Noah, soon we will pull back the cover and look, more restrictions will begin to lift, more waters recede, and more cherished elements of our daily living will begin again. But what if rather than just looking to what is out there, what we saw underneath was **new life,**  
**restored relationships,**  
**healthy communication,**  
**addressed dependencies and insecurities?**

Let me leave you with God's words to Noah, and please hear the promise as one from him to you.

**SLIDE 21:**

**Genesis 9:13-14** I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth. When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, and **I will remember my covenant with you.**

**SLIDE 22:**

**Let this Preparation be a PROMISE!**

**LET'S PRAY.**