

11/12/17 32 A

-- A little over a month ago, we lost a prominent rock and roll artist. Tom Petty died at the beginning of October shortly before his 67th birthday. He was known for a number of songs, but one of my favorites was *The Waiting*.

-- It was commonly known by a longer title, the first line of the chorus: *The Waiting is the hardest part*. He was speaking about the blossoming of a love relationship, but that truth applies to so much of life.

-- We easily tire of waiting for so many things. For instance, I know people who now refuse to use email. Instead, they text, because they want an instant answer, whether the matter is urgent or not.

-- But waiting has always been a challenge. Over 19 centuries before Tom Petty wrote his song, St. Paul had to speak to people in a community who were anxiously awaiting the coming of the Lord.

-- They (and he, at least at that time) believed that the Lord would be coming very soon, definitely within their lifetimes. They were concerned about their fellow believers who had died before this happened.

-- Paul had to reassure them that these believers would be with the Lord. They were to wait in hope until God's promises would be fulfilled.

-- Some 30 years later—almost exactly 19 centuries before Tom Petty's song—Matthew's gospel addressed people who were still waiting the Lord's second coming. By that time, many had figured that it might not be in their lifetimes.

-- He told this story of the wise and foolish virgins to show them that waiting for the Lord was not a matter of sitting and twittling our thumbs. There was the matter of proper preparation.

-- And that preparation is not carrying around signs saying that the end is near, or going on the airwaves to scare people with a menacing message about the end of the world.

-- Proper preparation for the Lord involves living every day in such a way that people can see God's love in us, by the way we do the ordinary things of life.

-- Yes, the preoccupations of a busy life will be there, and we can't completely escape them. But, if we develop a habit of daily prayer and commending all we do to the Lord, that busy pace of life will not be likely to overwhelm us.

-- Then we can have the attitude of St. John Bosco. He was a 19th century Italian priest who ran a home and school for orphans. A newspaper reporter came to interview him one day. He found him while he was in the recreation area shooting pool with some of the boys.

-- The reporter asked him, *What would you do if you found out right now that the Lord was coming for you in the next hour?* He responded, *I'd keep shooting pool.* He said that because, even while doing that, he was giving glory to God. He did that in all his daily actions.

-- If we try to live each day showing love to the people around us, we can be confident that, whatever we are doing at the moment, we are giving glory to God. We are waiting well.

-- Yes, the waiting can be the hardest part. Hope is probably one of the most difficult virtues to cultivate. But if we try to live each day in love, and if we cultivate regular prayer and a sense of God's presence, we can "Take it on faith and take it to the heart."

-- The waiting will be well worth it, because God has promised us a heavenly wedding feast that will never end.