

Message from Robin+

Patience has been on my mind lately. Maybe yours as well. In our Zoom Bible study of The Acts of the Apostles we learned that Paul spent years in prison over the length of his mission. How did he wait with patience? How was his mission kept alive in the waiting?

In the Gospel of Luke, Simeon and Anna spend their lives waiting in the temple, hoping to see the Messiah before they died. In the book of Exodus the story of Moses tells us that after he fled Egypt he was a shepherd caring for his father-in-law's flock for forty years before God spoke to him in the burning bush to send him back to Egypt to save God's people.

And in our reading this week from Deuteronomy Moses must draw on his faith because after all that waiting, all that leading of the stiff-necked people of God through the wilderness for forty more years, God tells Moses that he will not be crossing over into the Promised Land.

Priest Jay Sidebotham notes that, "We have many examples in scripture of faithful waiting. Waiting is a spiritual discipline. Patience is a spiritual virtue. I suspect we all know about waiting. Waiting for a vaccine. Waiting for covid restrictions to lift. Waiting to get a call back after an interview. Waiting in line to vote. Waiting for a doctor's report. Waiting for an election season to pass. Waiting for a paycheck. Waiting for things to stop changing. Waiting for things to start changing."

So what does holy waiting look like? Henri Nouwen indicates that such waiting is not passive, but rather active. Nouwen says, "Waiting is essential to the spiritual life. But waiting as a disciple of Jesus is not an empty waiting. It is a waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for. We wait during Advent for the birth of Jesus. We wait after Easter for the coming of the Spirit, and after the ascension of Jesus we wait for his coming again in glory. We are always waiting, but it is a waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps. Waiting for God is an active, alert - yes, joyful - waiting. As we wait we remember him for whom we are waiting, and as we remember him we create a community ready to welcome him when he comes."

So what is that activity? Sidebotham offers five ideas that may help us with our holy waiting.

1. **Gratitude:** A recognition, a mindfulness of the goodness that is part of the present. Some people make daily lists of those things for which they are grateful. Maybe one thing. Maybe 5. Maybe 100. Some people write daily notes to people to whom they owe a debt of gratitude. There are a lot of ways to do that. When in doubt, recite the General Thanksgiving daily (p. 101 in the Prayer Book).
2. **Trust:** an ability to live in the confidence that all will be well, that in the end all will be okay and if it's not okay it's not the end.
3. **Confession:** Admit the pain of waiting is tough. If you need language for that, God gave us the psalms.
4. **Service:** Why do we call a server in a restaurant a waiter? I'm not sure where that comes from but to me one of the ways to navigate my own impatience is to consider opportunities to be of help to someone, to be of service. Those opportunities surround us.
5. **Prayer:** The discipline of waiting, the virtue of patience may only be realized with God's help. Fruits of the Spirit, not fruits of my own spiritual evolution or magnificence. The confession that the anxiety is getting to us, that we're not sure how to manage it, can open the door to deeper patience.

Waiting can be hard. We all have to do it. Thank God for God's help, claiming the wisdom of Isaiah who promised that those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:13)

Art – James Tissot, Moses Sees the Promised Land From Afar