

6/2/2019

Living and faithful Spirit, the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God who is made known in Christ Jesus, bless us one and all as we wait on you this day. Amen.

Crucifixion. Resurrection. Ascension.

What an amazing progression of events over the last few weeks. Of course, this was true for Jesus but it is also true for each one of us. And then next Sunday; we celebrate Pentecost. It is not surprising if we are on an emotional and spiritual rollercoaster at this point. The only way to avoid this is to distance oneself **from** it. I don't think we do this on purpose. We know the story. We have heard it over and over again. Maybe to the point of taking it for granted; as one takes the rising and the setting of the sun as a normal expectation of the day to come.

For the apostles who were in the midst of all this, I think that they were operating on pure adrenaline and **I suspect**, a state of shock. All of these critical events happened in a space of 40 days. And now as we celebrate this last Sunday of Easter, we find the apostles hiding and praying; not sure of what to do next.

They counted on Jesus being there with them. I imagine that they had little idea of what the future held. Whatever Jesus had planned they were good to go. This is not all that difficult to understand. Those who have ever been involved with a new project or venture; if you were not the person who started it, as long as there was a leader who seemed to know what they were doing, and the idea had merit, full steam ahead. But what happens if that leader suddenly leaves partway into the project? Do you put things on hold, scrap the whole thing and go back to whatever you were doing before; or do you go on in faith that things will somehow work out? Would you feel better about things if your Boss came in and told you all to just wait 10 days or so and someone would be there to give you guidance and assistance? What do you do while you're are waiting? We know from the Book of ACTs, that the disciples gathered in a room and prayed. 10 days later, things changed drastically for them.

In "The Cost of Surrender," in the Winter 2010 issue of 'Just Between Us', Shelly Esser writes about a dark time in her life, when she learned that following God's will could be harder than she ever imagined:

"God called me to walk into a river of darkness, where there didn't seem to be even a hint of his goodness. Throughout that agonizing time, it became clear that I had developed this mistaken idea: God's good and perfect will feels good. Although I would never have dared say it out loud, I thought God owed me an easy road.

"But when I was confronted with dark circumstances, where God's presence appeared absent, the very foundation of my faith was shaken. Mistakenly, I put experience ahead of God's truth. My experience had been one of the things generally falling into place ... but nowhere in Scripture does God promise that his will always feels good. It simply is good, whether we realize it or not."

I know that some of you have experienced dark times in your lives. It is very scary. The apostles were scared and panicked after the crucifixion. They hid in fear that they might be next and despite everything that Jesus had said while he was with them, they simply did not understand. Then inexplicably, after the Resurrection, Jesus was back again although sporadically. None the less, He was back. This had to have given them hope. But then he left again and apparently for good this time. So, they gathered together, waited, and prayed.

Unfortunately, today, many of us are not very good at waiting.

A clergyman, a doctor and a time-management guru were playing golf together one day. Soon they got stuck behind a particularly slow group ahead of them. The time-management guy said, 'What's with these people? We've been waiting on the tee for more than 30 minutes and they're still not on the next green!'

The doctor agreed, "They're hopeless. I've never seen such rambling around a golf course." The clergyman spotted the approaching greenskeeper and asked him what was going on. "What's happening with that group ahead of us? They're surely too slow and useless to be playing, aren't they?"

The greenskeeper replied, "Oh, yes, that's a group of blind fire-fighters. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we always let them play for free anytime."

The three golfers fell silent for a moment. Then the clergyman said, "Oh dear, that's so sad. I shall say some special prayers for them tonight."

The doctor added, rather meekly, "That's a good thought. I'll get in touch with an ophthalmic surgeon friend of mine to see if there's anything that can be done for them."

After pondering the situation for a few seconds, the time-management expert turned to the greenskeeper and asked, "Why can't they play at night?"

When we are scared or feeling very alone, waiting on God is difficult.

In '6 Ways to Wait for God's Answer to Your Prayers' by Bob Hostetler; he writes;

"Waiting on God is not a passive posture. It involves action. It requires effort, much of which is counter-intuitive, particularly to 21st century people.

He goes on to discuss 6 ways that he feels are important for us when we find ourselves waiting for God to answer us. There are 6 ways to actively wait to hear from God:

1. Don't stop praying.

Psalms 130 is a prayer from beginning to end. David pours out his heart to God:

'Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications' (Psalm 130:1-2, NASB).

Waiting on God is not a cessation of prayer, but intensification. If we are waiting on God we are, if anything, more active in prayer than we were before.

2. Examine yourself.

While we wait on God, we also search our own hearts to confess any sin that may hinder an answer, or make any surrender that will further align us with God's plans and purpose.

3. Focus and refocus your heart, soul and mind.

Waiting on God often involves reading and repeating God's word and focusing our thoughts on "what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.... [and thinking] about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8, NLT).

4. Keep your eyes and heart open and alert.

Waiting on God requires a heightened attentiveness and watchfulness in which you scan your surroundings, circumstances, conversations and “coincidences” for clues and indications of God’s answer on the horizon:

5. Keep trusting, reminding and hoping.

Even as he waits, David reminds himself and those around him of who God is, what God has done and why they should continue to hope in Him.

6. And finally to Keep going.

Too often when we are waiting on God—or think we are—we tense and freeze and stop progressing... So rather than choosing inaction, we who wait on God can keep moving ahead, trusting as David did that God will guide our steps as we go”.

The disciples would have known the Psalms very well. I have to believe that they applied all 6 of these principles as they prayed in the upper room, trusting Jesus that help was on the way despite their fear and anxiety.

I will be the first one to candidly admit that my prayer life is not what it should be. I have spent most of my life running to and fro and praying on the go so to speak. I am an anxious person anyway and this leads me to always trying to be well prepared to handle whatever comes my way. In other words, I am in charge. Waiting on the Lord is difficult. It is kind of like wanting to lose weight but eating what I like. I figure if I keep moving and planning, God will come around to my way of thinking, and help out. Some of you may have similar prayer lives. Jesus knew well the fear and anxiety that the disciples would experience while they waited. He also knew well that they had no concept of the strength and courage that was coming to them on Pentecost. We may talk a little bit more about this next Sunday. The 10 days between the Ascension and Pentecost have a lot to teach us about prayerful waiting even when things seem dark and uncertain. Whether this is true for us as individuals, as a congregation, as a Diocese, or as a nation I think that we need to always keep in mind that we are never alone and God **is** in control. Things will work out in God’s time. They always do.

AMEN!