

Waiting for the Son
November 4, 2013
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[Visual example. Walk up with iPhone. Can't get a connection. Frustrated. Want it to work *now*, but the thing's just not cooperating.]

Ever been there?

I know you all have---well, at least those of you

who carry a smart phone and internet connection around in your pocket.

And even if you don't have one of these---I know you've felt the same frustration

waiting for a file to download on your computer,

Or for a bank representative to answer the phone

after you've been waiting on hold for what feels like five weeks!

And I know we've all been there, because we live in an age of waiting on instant gratification.

As the years move on, and technology keeps advancing faster and faster and faster,

We all get shuffled along with it, with a seemingly unstoppable momentum.

And as we're shoved forward faster and faster with our devices,

---though it doesn't always come---our natural minds start expecting this quickness all around us.

We not only expect it, but as our minds adjust to the world around us,

We actually come to rely on it, don't we?

We start to feel we need it---that instant gratification.

And not if, but when we don't get it, something's wrong.

We become frustrated.

Even *angry* when things don't happen as *immediately* as we expect them to.

What happens here in the world, is changing, and we're changing right along with it.

But is that necessarily a good thing?

Is it always good to change with the times?

Now, that's not a rhetorical question... just a good thought
for each of us to consider as we move along our own spiritual paths.

In my own opinion, I don't think all of the
ways we change together are necessarily alright, or okay.

Though it's important---and even necessary---to adapt,
Changing inside with the changes around us, isn't always the healthiest thing...
... not for our minds or for our souls, or for our future together
as people sharing space in a cluttered world.

Another good thought to let settle:

... Are our ways, always in sync with the ways of the Larger Spirit of Life?
Are our human ways, and our human advancements,
always leading us further into the peace of God?

This all ties in to what we're going to consider together, this morning,
in the presence of God, and in the company of each other.

This morning, our readings lead us into a meditation on PATIENCE.

Into thoughts about the peace that can potentially come to our hearts in waiting. And
watching.

Those are two activities a lot of us aren't too good at anymore,
But as fast as our download times might now be,

as fast as movies move from the theater to instant streaming,
as fast as we can now steam vegetables in our microwave---equipped with melted cheese--

This is something we're still all forced to do, right?

My mom just had her hysterectomy. I'm thankful to God the procedure went well
with that new robotic equipment that so
drastically speeds up a patient's recovery time...

... but past this, they're running tests to be sure there was no malignant growth.

It'll take a week to get the results back.

... Waiting. Watching.

We all slaved for months on our Halloween Festival,
which took place on Thursday, here at Deer Park...

... all of those weeks, those days, those hours before,
not knowing if a single person would show.

....Waiting. Watching.

The experience at first glance isn't too pleasant, is it?

It's a time of wondering. Wondering that often leads to doubt and fear
if we let our minds move that way.

It's a time that can lead us into frustration, and feelings of helplessness...

And these moments of waiting, they don't only come while we're standing in line, or
sitting on hold...

... but also in our relationship with God.

See, we a lot of times get frustrated with God,
the way we get frustrated with our download times.

Why isn't this happening yet? It should be happening!

Why hasn't a word yet come to my ears, or a sign yet come to my eyes?

Where is God's voice? When will God act!

This pause between moments...between happenings...

... it can be a tense time of that doubt and that fear.

...But it's also a holy time, crucial to our spiritual lives.... To our experience of God.

And our scripture readings for today lead us into this thought.

From Habakkuk, Chapters 1 and 2:

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. 2 O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? 3 Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4 So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous-- therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

(Habakkuk 2) I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

In our reading from Luke, what do we find?

Zacchaeus, in Jericho, swarmed by the crowd,

all of them eagerly anticipating the arrival of Jesus. This Son of God.

All of them watching. Waiting. For just the sight of him.

And Zacchaeus running and climbing into that tree, to get a better look

as he sits in the rush of that tense pause.

Both of these readings start us out in a tight moment. An anxious moment.

A moment of staring at the screen, and waiting for that download.

Wondering why isn't it here now?

They remind us of that place in our minds we've all experienced too often,
of so desperately seeking something we think should already be there.

But in these stories, neither of these people are met instantly with what they want, are they?

Neither of them immediately see what their eyes and hearts so desperately seek.

Instead, what do they do?

They watch, and they wait.

In the heart of God they stand with souls open, hoping to be filled with that Spirit of Life,
From which they seek an answer.

They stand still, waiting on God to do what God will do.

In all of this waiting, what's the piece of ourselves we feel stand out from the words?

What virtue inside of us is lifted from the deep parts of our souls,
out in front of our eyes? ...Patience, right?

Patience, not just because they're not
immediately getting what they want or hope for,

But patience because neither of them give up the ghost, right?

Because neither of them STOP waiting. Neither of them turn their backs and walk away.

Both continue on. Both continue watching for God
with their eyes and hearts as they stand still in that pause.

Okay... and there's something else implied here, in these stories.

What's the difference between just waiting for something, and being patient?

...Two people are standing in line at the customer service desk down at King Soopers.

They've been waiting alongside another for five minutes... both of them.

Standing there, their feet growing sore, one becomes aggravated. Angry.

"Where are they? I've been waiting here for ten minutes,

and no one's here to cash my scratch ticket!"

The other says to him, "Don't worry, someone will come."

The first stomps off, choosing to just stop at the next gas station on the way home.

The other remains, the clerk coming to the desk just as the one slips out to the parking lot with their scratch ticket.

Both stood for the same amount of time.

Both were subject to the same number of minutes.

But the first was simply waiting, while the second embraced *patience*.

And this patience, while watching and waiting,

is exactly what's shown here in these stories as we hear about these two people

waiting on the sight of God moving in their lives.

So... alright. Good, they're patient. What does that mean to our spiritual lives?

What does the fact of them being patient have to do with

anything positive or helpful to us, in our own relationship with God?

There are a lot of personal thoughts that can come with this,

(and please let them in as we meditate on this thought, together...)

... But a thought that comes to my own mind, is the fact
that there are a couple of other beautiful things wrapped up in the act of being patient.

And what's the most important one?

What did the second person say while standing in that customer service line?

"Don't worry, someone will come."

An act of *faith* is required in being patient, right?

A belief that something we don't yet see,

something we haven't yet experienced, will enter our lives...

...Whenever that time might be.

And there's something else that comes in being patient, too.

Trust, right? ...*Trust* is required in patience.

A knowledge that though things seem tough now, tense now, as we stand still in a pause,

That something is in the process of coming together,

to change the reality we feel so stuck in, at any given moment.

So I hope these things are starting to tie together, as we meditate on the ways waiting,

and watching, and the patience we let fill our souls as we do these things,

Come into play in our relationship with God, as we live day to day.

As we wait and watch---like Zacchaeus, like Habakkuk---

---through so many different moments for God to move, and speak in our lives.

Alright, so what happens next in these stories?

From Habakkuk, moving on from where we stopped. Chapter 2, verse 2:

2 Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. 3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. 4 Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

Picking back up in Luke, verse 5:

5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." 8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." 9 Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

What's shown to us in these moments?

Fulfillment, right?

And not just fulfillment, but something that causes what's inside of us to run over.

Something greater than even what we'd hoped and expected to see

as we waited and watched patiently through all of those moments before.

In both we see a sense of the glory of God overwhelm them, overtake them

with astonishment, as the answers they receive, as the experiences they have

after seeing God move, and hearing God speak, does something to change their lives forever

in startlingly beautiful ways they never could have imagined in any moment before.

This waiting, this watching, and this patience we keep while we do both...

... they're central to our spiritual lives, and to our experience of God.

They're central to the health of our souls as we wait through what, a lot of times,

feels like the *gloom* of anticipation,

For the sun to finally shine through, and warm us with the love and light of God.

Because we might live in a changing world, where things just seem to rev up
and move faster and faster each month, each year...

...our expectations might unnaturally change to think
all things must move at this same ludicrous speed,

But the greater Soul of God, through all of these changes remains the same.

Just as in our bodies, blood is always flowing, our cells are always moving,
dying, replicating, regenerating, but as a whole, you're always still you...

... that greater Presence of Life that encompasses all things, is always our same God.

And the All-ness of God (yes, I just made up that word, but hopefully it works)

The All-ness of God moves at a different pace

than these tinier pieces of eternity that are you and me.

If God is God, than God perceives, understands, experiences in ways we can't even
imagine.

In ways entirely different than us and what we can possibly think of

from this very limited place we stand.

And it's up to us, as we live and breathe in God.

As we seek to be in relationship with God—friendship with God---

To embrace the faith and trust that God will do as God does,

and that what God does will be good.

It's up to us to be patient, as we wait and watch for that moment

when we know in our hearts we will soon hear God speak, and see God move,
In our own lives in a way that will shock and astonish us,
past anything we could have ever expected before as we stood still in that pause.
In ways that will leave us overwhelmed with wonder,
at the beautiful power, and love of God as it spills into us, and overflows from our souls
and leaves us in a place of worship and awe.

Though the world is so frighteningly fast paced, these days,
Let's remember patience as we adapt to the things changing around us.
Let's remember our forever God, as we watch and wait
for God to do what God will do in our lives.

I hope in the days after we leave this sanctuary together and go back to our own lives,
Stuffed full with 4G networks and microwaved foods,
We can each spend some time meditating on this faith, this trust, this patience.
And the ways all of these things help us to experience God
and the life around us more deeply.

As we prepare to go back into the clutter of our daily lives,

I'd like to leave us with the clarity that comes from a beautiful thought,

found in Ecclesiastes, chapter 3. (The one that starts out, "For everything there is a season, and a time and purpose for every matter under heaven.")

We've all heard the words many times before from the Byrds,

but not so much the words after.

I'll read them now for us to let sit in our souls

as we move on in worship today and each day after:

From verse 10:

(Ecclesiastes 3)10 I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. 11 He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; 13 moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. 14 I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. 15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.

Amen.