

Just Wait...

16 May 2020 – Easter 6

How many times in the past two months have you been asked to be patient...to just wait. One? Three? A dozen? A hundred? Who's to say, I've not been keeping track, have you?

The truth is we don't know what the future holds for us. And that's not NEW. None of us are promised tomorrow. We have been living in a perpetual state of anxiety for the past 8 weeks. We were told we were not allowed to gather in our buildings anymore, so we drafted statements, posted them, sent out emails, made phone calls and waited. And waited. And waited.

A couple of weeks in, we began to develop a routine. Church online. Something new. A similar yet different way of being Church. A need, a longing to connect in ways we had not connected in awhile, or perhaps, ever. A couple more weeks and the routine was taking shape. Anxieties subsided and while there were still the unknown, we at least had a semblance of a "new normal".

Then we were told to expect an announcement from the Premier. We hung on Dr. Henry's every word, waiting to be told what would happen next. And then we waited for our Denominational Authorities to have their Townhall and Zoom meetings to find out when we would "get back to normal" and gather, once again for Church.

In the first reading from Acts today, Paul stands in front of the Aeropagus, which is an outcropping of rock, northeast of the Acropolis. He's addressing the residents of Athens whom he refers to as "extremely religious in every way". Paul goes on to refer the Athenians as "God's offspring" and says one of Paul's most famous sayings, "in him we live and move and have our being". What does this mean? Through God we live and move and have our being? Just Wait...

In Peter's first letter he speaks of baptism which is not a means of washing to remove dirt, rather it is a spiritual cleansing; something which is "an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God. In other words, Peter is speaking of deliverance from evil through baptism. Once we are baptised, we receive the Holy Spirit into ourselves and we will never, ever be the same. We are now responsible for how we govern ourselves in the world and how we govern ourselves reflects on the one in who's name we are baptised. What does this mean? Just Wait...

Last week began what is known as Jesus' Farewell Discourses in which he is preparing his followers to the fact that he is going to leave them. Jesus was crucified, descended into the dead and was resurrected. He's shown himself to his disciples, beginning with Mary Magdalene, who becomes known as the Disciple to the Disciples.

He appears to his disciples in the Upper Room, first without Thomas present, then a second time when Thomas is there. Remember, Jesus knew what he was doing from the moment he made his "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. He knew he was to die. He knew he was to fight for the salvation of humanity. And once he was victorious and was resurrected, he knew his time on Earth was limited.

The Gospel for today from John's Gospel is no different. Jesus is speaking of the promise of the Holy Spirit. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth. An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of someone or something. The word advocate is both noun and verb.

Jesus says "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live, you also will live". The world will no longer see Jesus because he will be Ascending into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God.

The actual date of Ascension is the 21st of May, it is 10 days before Pentecost. I'm not going to give away next week's sermon. Rather I want to introduce you to something that is very special. A world-wide call to prayer, which is known as Thy Kingdom Come. You will have received links in your email yesterday. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to check it out.

One of the ways you can participate is to go online and register. You'll see a map with white lights all over it. You are invited to add your light to the map as we continue a world-wide phenomenon of intentional prayer. Another thing you can do is pledge to pray for five people, every day, from the 21st to the 31st of May. You can find resources for this in yesterday's email.

Jesus says "Those who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Not immediately. But soon. The faithful are being asked to wait; much like we are being asked to wait.

You see, we have been told to wait, yet again because it is the right and faithful thing to do. We want to learn from the tragedy in Calgary and keep the most vulnerable safe.

And so, we wait.

While we wait we can do something very powerful.

We can deepen our relationship with the Divine.

We don't need to "wait" for Pentecost, or Easter, or Christmas to begin a relationship with God. Because you see, God is all around us.

The Holy Spirit has been with us from the very beginning.

The Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, or Advocate, or Comforter, or Paraclete has been with since the beginning of Creation.

Both the Creation of the world and our Creation into the world.

We need not wait for the Coming of the Spirit to enhance our relationship with Christ. We celebrate Ascension and Pentecost as we mark time in the Christian calendar.

The next two weeks readings will be filled with incredible imagery.
We will be challenged to push our imaginations as we conceive of the physical ascension of Jesus as well as the Day of Pentecost.

As you have heard me say before, I say to you again today.
Things are holding as they are for now, because it is the right thing to do. It's not easy.
But it is the faithful response as the leadership gather by Zoom to discuss what to do next. We hope to have a fuller picture of what this will all look like by the end of the first week of June.

Please stay with me.

Play stay with us.

Trust in God as God trusts in us.

All shall be revealed when the time is right.

What does that mean?

Just wait...

You see, we don't need to wait for God to be with us. God already is.

We don't need to wait for have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus lives in us through the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit which brought us into the world. That same Spirit who was with us on the day of our Baptism.

That Advocate who has made us an Advocate with the world.

Because we know God, because we have an experience of the Divine, we must share that with all we encounter.

It doesn't take any special tools or lessons.

It's not about judgment or teaching or preaching or healing the sick.

It's about living our faith.

It's about loving our neighbours as ourselves.

It's about being.

We are called to live our lives in the way the Spirit has taught us.

Knowing right from wrong. Knowing good from evil.

My sisters and brothers, I ask you please.

Just wait.

Wash your hands.

Breathe deeply.

Pray.

Clean.

Be.

And when the time is right and safe, we will be together again. Just wait.

Thanks be to God.

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Acts 17.22-31

Psalm 66.8-20

1 Peter 3.13-22

John 14.15-21