

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered-Down

Thursday, August 20, 2020

Becoming Better Waiters

... making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

—Ephesians 5:16

They who wait for the Lord shall 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 40:31

For the moment we seem to be frozen in a time of waiting, and it doesn't feel very good. We have long been wondering and anticipating "when this will all be over." And when *will* this all be over? Dr. Fauci speaks of a vaccine early in the new year, and it has become very tempting to count down the days and to want the next few months to be over. It is rarely wise to wish time away, and this attitude of just waiting it out is obviously an unhealthy one! So how are we to wait? A few scriptures come to mind.

The Thessalonian Church comes to mind as an example of how *not* to wait. They were much enamored of their hope in Christ's return, and became so excited about it all that many of them lapsed into idleness. The Lord was indeed coming again, Paul taught them, but there was no excuse for idly waiting. He knew that time is a precious commodity, and must not be squandered. The King James Version of his words to the Ephesians states it all succinctly: *Redeem the time because the days are evil*. These are evil times, but we can make those evil days into good by **seizing every opportunity** for Christ. This is a far cry from Thessalonian inertia! What opportunities for service are you finding in these days? Follow that trail. In times of difficulty it is hard to see opportunities. I remember studying Andrew Carnegie's skill at making huge business expansions during times of major recessions. While others could see only a downturn, Carnegie saw opportunity, and he seized it. It is hard to think big in difficult times. May God give us the vision to do just that.

The Bible also speaks of waiting as something to be done with **eager anticipation**. In Romans 8:18-19: *I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.* To put that in our immediate situations, we might say, "Yes it will be wonderful when the virus is all behind us!" and then to borrow some of that "someday joy" for today. Children know how to look forward to Christmas and take some of that excitement for today's enjoyment. Let us take a little time to imagine

those sweet days which await us, taste of their joy, and in doing so find gladness for this moment.

We must also remember that waiting seems like hard work for a good reason. It *is* hard work. David concludes that wonderful 27th Psalm with an exhortation: *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take courage and wait for the Lord*. It takes some real gumption to wait. Pray that God give us **strength** for this task.

A very popular passage regarding waiting is Isaiah 40:39: *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*. [Enjoy the fuller passage printed below. It is printed in the old KJV as most songs and popular quotations of it are from that rendering.] There is a promise of strength to be received in our waiting upon God and many of us have lifted this verse to God as a prayer. The verse has also been set to music on more than one occasion and I have even found myself singing it.

Some extra meaning from this verse came my way as I was once told of a *misinterpretation* of the passage. The verse calls us to *wait upon the Lord*, and more recent translations have appropriately translated that to mean to *hope* or *trust in the Lord*, but there is a nuance to the word *wait* which I like to keep in mind. Rather than passively wait for the Lord, it was suggested, why not wait upon the Lord as a waiter in a restaurant would wait upon a diner? Let me clear from the start, this is not really the correct interpretation of Isaiah's words, but it is a misinterpretation which artfully summarizes a very biblical perspective on waiting. Let us wait upon God as a waiter—patiently, attentively, ready to listen and obey, and focused upon the service of another and not ourselves. And lest waiting upon the Almighty God in heaven sounds a little too lofty and ethereal, may we all remember that a call to service usually comes through the cries and needs of humble folks all around us.

Let us work at being better waiters, with towel neatly draped over our arm, focused and prepared to serve as God would desire, not so caught up in our own issues of life, and glad for the honor of this sacred vocation. My only service as a waiter has been in church and service club dinners, but what little experience I have tells me that it is a discipline which can teach us all a great deal. Let us ask God to spare us from the crime of wishing time away, and instead to make us better waiters.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. —Isaiah 40:27-31 (King James Version)

To thee, O Jesu, I direct my eyes; to thee my hands, to thee my humble knees; to thee my heart shall offer sacrifice; to thee my thoughts, who my thoughts only sees; to thee my self — my self and all I give; to thee I die; to thee I only live. —Sir Walter Raleigh