

IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING
[written in oral form]

Psalm 27:1,4, 13-14
MT theme "Waiting"

September 10, 2017
Gordon Allaby

The Ministry Team's fall theme is "waiting"

There are lots of passages in the Bible, especially the OT about waiting,.... patiently waiting on God.

Waiting is presented as a virtue and act of faith.

Waiting.....

~~~~~

Well, to be honest, I despise waiting.

I ... Hate to wait.

*Yesterday, I came to the church a little before noon, and without thinking, came in by St. Jacob's Market.*

*The cars were backed up to Walmart, and it took nearly 15 from there to get to the church.*

*I hate waiting.*

*I don't like to wait for service. I don't like to wait in emergency rooms, and I've done that too many times.*

*I dread flying because of all the waiting, in line for security, at the gate, in the plane for takeoff, and so on.*

*Oh, and don't forget traffic on the 401.....*

*I Do Not like to wait.*

~~~~~

And, this presents a problem.....when the theme affirms waiting.

Verse 14 of today's text, twice states, "Wait for the Lord."

Wait for the Lord!

~~~~~

Well,.....If God can do all things and be everywhere, then why can't God be on time?

Why.....oh why.... do we have to wait for God?

~~~~~

I think I approached this passage with bias... and a poor attitude.

So, I concluded it was prudent for me to do a closer inspection, just in case I was missing something.

~~~~~

It turns out, my perception was way off.

Psalm 27 has similarities to Psalm 23, with the added aspect of a refugee.

The psalmist is being pursued by military enemies. They are encamped nearby and ready to attack. He fled to the temple, and likely at night.

You can imagine his thrill of seeing the temple lights beaming the way, and the sense of safety once there in the presence of the ark of the covenant / in God's house.

He cried out in relief, once inside, "Whom shall I be afraid?"  
He felt Safe.

Moreover, he went to God's house to pray, to seek wisdom and to be recharged and inspired.  
Verse 4, notes that he was "Inquiring"/ petitioning God for insight.  
God's house was a place to learn and grow,..... and....  
as we all know, it takes time to learn, to change and grow,....  
And, that means waiting.

~~~~~

In my former protest,.....I neglected to consider good / beneficial waiting, such as, waiting for fruit to ripe or vegetables to grow.

It would be foolish to scoff at That waiting, and pick fruit or vegetables before it was time.

There is Good waiting.

~~~~~

Indeed, and verses 13 and 14 expands understanding even further.

"I shall see the goodness of God in the land of the living"  
Wait for God  
Be strong, and let your heart take courage.  
Wait for the Lord."

This word for "wait" can also be translated as "HOPE".

A whole dimension arises when we consider the Hope in waiting.

~~~~~

We would gladly wait for help to come to our rescue.

When the emphasis is on hope.....waiting takes on a very difference nuance.

~~~~~

The picture presented is of a refugee waiting in a sanctuary / a safe place for deliverance. And, that refugee knows that protection, deliverance, with insight and growth, comes from God

~~~~~

We rightly call this place / our place of worship....a sanctuary.

Sanctuary is a safe place. Sanctuary is a welcoming place,... and it is place where we do "other".

Normal routines / typical habits / our constant busyness is left outside. We do Other here.

We pray together. We worship God. We sing. We search and ask tough questions, and at times we wait.....to sense the transcending touch of God's spirit.
Oh, and we gladly, with rejoicing... give away some of our money.

We do "Other" in sanctuary.
This is our church / our sanctuary.

~~~~~  
Nevertheless, there is even more to this.....sanctuary, and it includes ..  
"the Land of the Living."

Picture.....a storm shelter.

I imagine there are a lot of people huddled together, right now in Florida, in storm shelters.

A storm shelter usually is not a lavish place, but it is a safe place.  
In a storm shelter, all sorts/ all kinds of people are there for protection. And,... they are gladly,...in hope,.... waiting out the storm.  
They are waiting together.  
It would be reckless, even suicidal to be impatient / to give up waiting and go out into the tempest.  
There is death and destruction out in storm,.....but **not** in the shelter / **not** in the sanctuary.

Huddled together, regardless of name, wealth or pedigree, they are in **the land of the living**.  
The Living are in a shelter / a sanctuary....and they are, with hope, waiting together.

~~~~~  
With embarrassment and humility, I confess that my tirade about waiting was extremely self-centred.

I got perturbed waiting in the traffic by St. Jacob's market as if I WAS the ONLY person that mattered.
In essence, I regarded all others as obstacles to my "personal" progress. ~~~~~
Everyone had their own stories.....their own hopes and fears,... and for a brief few minutes, we collectively chose the same path.
That delay was a common journey happening.
They were waiting too....., and the same goes with a traffic jam on the 401,.....or the slow lines at the airport.

I wasn't unique.
I wasn't the exception being inconvenienced by others.
Not at all, I was part of the whole group.

~~~~~  
Impatience is clearly a sign of narrow-minded selfishness.  
~~~~~

Waiting in traffic feels solitary in one's own car, but it's not.

In a storm shelter / in a sanctuary ... the "living" are keenly aware that they are in the land of the living, together.
And, their hope / their wait.....is to survive the storm in order to go out and keep on living.
We --Waterloo North Mennonite Church--we do sanctuary.

And, thanks to all those who volunteer in our church / We....

Our church is a welcoming, safe place to recharge, to be inspired,... to search and ask bold questions.....so that we can go out and live another week..... because we know.....there are countless metaphorical storms going on,.....all around,....every day.

Inside and Outside of our church, there are people hurting, people in distraught loneliness, people afraid and confused,... and people searching for help.

Just this past week, two desperate people came to our church for assistance.....and they received help.

~~~~~

All of us here, go out from sanctuary, to make the world a better place, ....be it caring for children,... assisting aging parents... helping a neighbour or a friend,..... . teaching students....or working directly in social services.

No matter what you do, day to day,.....because of God, because of the church's influence on you,.... because you chose to be here today,.....You are making the world a better place/ you are doing God's will.

Each one of us.....are in the land of the living.....for a reason.

~~~~~

Unapologetically, Waterloo North is a sanctuary / a storm shelter.

We are here to do **other**.....to be recharged, and to rejoice in being together,.....and that includes potluck lunches, too.

~~~~~

Until God lead us in a different direction, this is who / why we are.

~~~~~

Some people want us to be more / to have a focussed task, and that prodding and searching is good.

To be sure, all kinds of ministries radiate from this place; regardless, sanctuary must be a place to ask uncomfortable questions and to search for more.

~~~~~

With that said, a caveat for young adults:

I am now a parent of a young adult, and of course, I'd love to have my daughter in church, every Sunday.

But, like it or not, I know what is going on.....and wisdom takes time,.....and that means us older and wiser folks will have to do some waiting.

University age people are like storm hunters.

The wisdom of seeking sanctuary has not come to them, yet.

They find fancy in dancing with the tempest,....so they surely do need our prayers....because it's dangerous out there.

In addition, to those older "young adults": I hope we do not yield to the temptation of trying to lure you back to us in sanctuary.

Yes, I've heard that you don't find church meaningful and relevant, but I'm sorry,.....it's not about you..... just as my time in traffic was not just about me.

The world is bigger than that,.....and so is God's work.

To you older young adults, you need to get back involved in the church,.....change what you may, but the world needs storm shelters / we need it.....and you are the future.

So, realize the plural/ the community -- the land of the living, and choose to continue the passion of building up community for the sake of Christ.

Church is not always pretty, and at times it's ugly,.....but we are together, even when it's like a smelly storm shelter...

With great hope for God's deliverance.....and hope for God's help to get us through the week,...we gather to recharge for a reason--God's reason..... --as followers of Christ.

~~~~~

Right Now Right here

We are waiting together in the land of the living

Treasure this time.

Celebrate it / rejoice.....andtake that life spark with you...all week....to all people.