

The Journey- Waiting

Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:10-18

Waiting is an important part of almost every journey. The last couple of weeks, we looked at the various spiritual journeys that God has us on and how He wants to reveal Himself to us in new and deeper ways on those journeys. Last week we looked at the importance of having an eternal perspective on our journey. This week, our Scripture readings give us an opportunity to understand the importance of *waiting* while we make our journey. At first, these two things—waiting and journey—seem contradictory to one another, but in reality they are intimately related. An elevator is a wonderful example of the connectedness of waiting and journey.

There are several important things that take place when we get on an elevator and wait with others. There is a goal, an invitation to be patient, and relationships. These are also important parts of our waiting and journeying with God. Let's look first at the importance of anticipating the goal.

In order for us to anticipate what is coming we have to keep our hearts and minds focused on the goal of our waiting and journeying rather than on ourselves. I remember getting on an elevator years ago and I was preoccupied with various things that I needed to get done. As I waiting for the elevator to reach the correct floor, I went over my to-do list in my head. Eventually, the elevator doors opened and this woman started to get on the elevator and jumped back in fright. I had forgotten to push the button, so the elevator had not moved. This woman thought she was getting on an empty elevator since it was just sitting idle on the first floor. She was very disturbed to find me there!

On our journey with God, it is important for us to not become so self-preoccupied, that we lose focus of the goal of our journey—union with God. In our Gospel reading today, we heard that the people who were following John the Baptist's ministry were, "filled with expectation" (Luke 3:15a). They were looking past themselves and their immediate situation to see the greater and more glorious thing that was coming. John the Baptist helped to build their anticipation at what was coming by saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). An important part of our waiting while journeying with God is staying focused on what is coming.

Another important part of waiting and journeying with God is being patient. It can sometimes be comical how impatient people are on elevators. I've seen people repeatedly push the button that closes the doors as if the sheer number of times they pushed it would force the doors to close faster. I've also seen people push the button for their floor over and over as if this would magically speed up the elevator. Most of us pretty impatient! Journeying and waiting with God requires patience, though.

Throughout Sacred Scripture, we are challenged to be patient. One such verse comes from the letter of James, which states, "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it

receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7-8). Advent is a special time for being patient; it reminds us that we cannot magically speed up what God is doing in our lives nor speed up where He is taking us physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. God’s timing is perfect, so we must simply be patient, waiting with anticipation.

Waiting and journeying with God is also an invitation into relationship. Going back again to the image of the elevator, we can see how relationship plays an important part of the journey. For most of us, when we get on an elevator with people we don’t know, we tend to strike up superficial conversations about the weather, or sports, or news. The conversations are usually awkward and short; they are focused on filling up time, not deepening relationships. In fact, the elevator usually cannot move *fast enough* when we are on it with people we don’t know. However, when we get on an elevator with someone we know and care about, we tend to focus more on our conversation than on how quickly the elevator is moving.

This is how it should be as we wait and journey with God—while our anticipation is directed toward where we are headed, our attention is focused on Who we are with, God. The more time we spend with Him, the less awkward our conversation with Him becomes and our relationship with Him grows deeper. Our waiting and journeying with God moves us from a superficial conversation to a more intimate one, which actually helps deepen our anticipation and patience. We heard this level of intimacy in our Responsorial Psalm today—

God indeed is my savior;
I am confident and unafraid.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

-Isaiah 12:2

As we continue to move toward the celebration of the birthday of our Savior, Jesus Christ, I encourage us to be mindful of how our journey with God has called us to focus on where He is leading us, on the patience it takes to wait with Him, and the relationship He is constantly renewing with us.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:

- ✚ Prayerfully imagine yourself on an elevator with God. Where is the elevator going? What is happening in your heart as you realize that the God of the universe is on an elevator with you? What does the conversation between the two of you sound like? Is the waiting uncomfortable or relaxed, peaceful or intimidating, hopeful or disappointing?
- ✚ Read Psalm 25 and pay attention to the numerous uses of the word “wait.” The Hebrew word for wait also means, “hope,” so your translation might use this word instead. If so, change it to “wait.” What does this Psalm stir up in your heart? What do you want to say to God based on what you’ve read in Psalm 25?