

Today is the 7th Sunday of Easter, the Sunday after Ascension Day and the Sunday before Pentecost. A time of waiting.

I don't know about you but I find waiting really, really difficult. When I was growing up my least favourite words were wait and be patient, and to be honest I still struggle with being patient and waiting. I tend to want to rush ahead to, to deal with situations in my own strength, in my own way, , not in God's way or timing, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Waiting can be so difficult can't it? We can feel anxious and frustrated as we wait. Very often we want things to happen now right this minute or maybe even yesterday.

I don't think any of us like waiting do we but it's something that we have to do each and every day. We may be waiting in excitement for a holiday, for the birth of a child or grandchild, for a house move. We may be waiting for someone we know and love to experience the love, mercy and grace of God. We may be waiting anxiously for a decision about a possible redundancy, we may be waiting in a situation that we find overwhelming and exhausting. And sometimes if we have been waiting a long, long time we feel like just giving up.

In the reading from Acts, after seeing Jesus ascend to heaven, the disciples return to Jerusalem, and they are waiting.

They can teach us a lot about waiting.

The what of waiting.

What were they waiting for? The disciples were waiting for the promised Holy Spirit, but they weren't told how long that waiting would be, And for us individually and as the body of Christ in this place we are unsure of how long we will have to wait for the things that we are waiting and longing for.

As I stated earlier, as individuals we may be waiting for many different things, but as the body of Christ in this place we are waiting too.

In the time between Ascension and Pentecost we are waiting to experience a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in the longer term we are waiting for our beloved Vicar David, Kathy and Zanna to leave us in the beginning of July and then we will be waiting for the arrival of a new vicar, we don't know who it will be or when it will be, we have to wait.

The disciples teach us about the why of waiting too.

Why were the disciples waiting? They were waiting in obedience, obedience to Jesus' command to wait together for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Why are we waiting? I'm sure many of us have both said and sung those words. For many of us we are waiting because that is just how life is, Sometimes we wait because that is all that we can do, we may be waiting and praying for healing for ourselves or a loved one, we may be waiting for God's guidance and wisdom about an important decision, and so he provides us that space and time in which to wait and seek his face.

But we also wait, as the first disciples did, in obedience to God.

We are living in the time between Jesus' ascension and his glorious return. We, like those first disciples have been commissioned by Jesus to share the good news of the gospel, the good news of his love, his joy, his peace, his compassion, his forgiveness, the good news of eternal life which are to be found in him. And like the first disciples we can't do it in our own strength, we need the Holy Spirit, and so we wait in obedience.

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The what of waiting. The Why of waiting and now.....The how of waiting? The disciples waited **prayerfully**. As they waited they prayed, we read that they continued together in prayer, this stresses for us the continuous action of their praying and we too have been called to pray in our waiting, and to persevere and be persistent in prayer. I wonder how may God be calling us to pray individually and together in the coming weeks and months?

The disciples waited in **unity**. They were all together constantly in prayer along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers, they put aside their differences and waited and prayed in unity.

In our gospel reading we heard how Jesus prayed prior to his crucifixion that his followers may be one as he and the Father are one. The interaction of prayer unity and mission are vital in our commissioning to spread and share the good news of the gospel.

They **waited patiently, expectantly, they trusted God** as they waited for his perfect timing, trusting that he would keep his word and fulfil his promises. And so each of us are called to trust God and to wait patiently and expectantly, in the words of Tom right to wait it's not like people in a dark room wondering if anyone will ever come with a lighted candle, no it's like people in the early morning who know that the sun has risen and who are now waiting for the full brightness of midday.

The disciples waited patiently but it wasn't a passive waiting. As they waited they prayed and sought God as to who should be the person that was to take Judas' place. And for us too biblical waiting isn't a passive waiting around for something to happen, in our waiting we are called to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom in Word and deed, care for the broken, the vulnerable, the weak, the isolated, those who grieve, those who are different to us, we are called to care for the least the lonely and the lost, we are called to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God, to be a voice for those who have no voice, to be moved not by fear or frustration but by compassion, to have hearts full of love for God and for each other.

Waiting can be a process, a process of becoming the people that God has called us to be. God encourages us to wait not in frustration but in patience and in hope. We pray don't we may your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom of God has already come and broken into our world in the person of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom is at work among us through the life giving Holy Spirit. But we live don't we in the tension of the now and the not yet?

God invites each of us to trust in his goodness and his faithfulness to trust him in our waiting and to relinquish our need to always be in control, and as we do this we begin to experience his love and his peace in our hearts. I pray that as we wait as individuals for whatever it is we're waiting for, and as we wait as the body of Christ in this place for the next step, we will wait with expectant trusting and hope filled hearts, believing that God is with us in our waiting. And I pray too that as we wait we will be aware that we are enfolded in God's love, that our eyes will be opened to see God at work around us, that our ears will be opened to hear his still small voice as he speaks peace to our anxieties and hope to our hearts.