

## **Seventh Sunday of Easter May 24, 2020**

Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:6-14

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven.

Forty days- does that number sound familiar? Forty years in the wilderness for the Israelites going from Egypt to the promised land. Forty days and nights on the Ark for Noah and his family adrift on the flood waters as God does a hard reboot of the world. Forty days in the wilderness for Jesus- tempted by Satan- waited on by the angels. Forty days- the length of Lent.

Over the previous 40 days Jesus has been with and appeared to the disciples and others. According to the author of Luke and Acts he has taught them about the Kingdom of God- has opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He has told them that they- his disciples- will now be witnesses to the world.

Witnesses, like in a court, giving their testimony to their experience of Jesus. Of who he is and what he has meant to them.

But first- they are to sit down and stay put in Jerusalem. They are to wait. Wait for the promised Holy Spirit to come and stir in them. Wait for this gift before they move again into the world as witnesses.

And according to Acts, what is the first question asked of Jesus once he has said these things?

Is it time now? Is it time to go? The disciples are like children anxious to get to their favorite place. It is time now!?

Jesus responds, "It's not for you to know the time, that's God's doing. Your job right now, is to wait. When it's time- you'll know it."

And then... just like that... Jesus is gone. Ascended to heaven- "working from home" as one meme put it.

And so, the disciples return to Jerusalem and... wait. Wait for they don't know how long. Weeks, months, years? Wait, for the Holy Spirit to come and set them loose on the world. Wait.

Sound familiar? Waiting in a particular place for an unspecified amount of time. Knowing what you are waiting for- but not knowing how long it will be before that happens.

We also know the emotions that evokes, don't we. Impatience- when is this going to end! Boredom- these four walls again! Questions- how long is this going to be, how will we know when it's time to go? Fear-what if something happens while we wait, if this isn't the safest place to be? Nostalgia- remember what it was like before all of this? Before everything got turned on its head.

The disciples must have felt all of those things and more as they lived in this- in-between time. This time waiting for what had

been promised to happen. Between Jesus leaving and the Holy Spirit coming.

So, what did they do? During this time? Did they put together puzzles (have you seen the newest one from Heinz- 570 pieces and all red)? Did they learn to cook new things? Finally go through all those old photos or organize the garage? Catch up with their family (they'd been on the road for three years)? Attend far too many Zoom meetings?

Maybe they did (well, maybe not the Zoom meetings), but what we know they did-was pray constantly, that they praise Jesus and worship God. While they wait.

They must have talked, don't you think? Remembered what Jesus had told them about the scriptures and how he fit into them. Shared the stories of when Jesus had healed the woman with the flow of blood. Wondered how in the world he got those loaves and fishes to feed all those people. Chuckled over how Jesus used to get the scribes so flustered with his teaching. Wondered what it might mean to love each other and to love their neighbors, their enemies. Thought about what they might say about Jesus. How they might give testimony about their life with him. To speak about that hope that lay within them. That Jesus was not dead, but alive. That he would come again. That he was God's love for us made flesh.

We are- I am- impatient in our in-between time. Impatient for the time to be together again- not mediated by hand sanitizer and masks but TOGETHER in that hand shaking, back slapping, hugging one another until the stuffing pops out kind of way.

But, Jesus told the disciples he came to bring life. And right now in being together like that, lies not life but the possibility of disease and death. So, for us, it is still the time to stay put. To wait. But what are we doing in the meantime? Is this a time when nothing happens? Or is this the time when the most important stuff happens? When the foundation is laid? The testimony prepared? The memory refreshed?

Is it time yet? We ask, like impatient children. No, it's not time yet. But when the time comes- look out!

In the meantime- let our waiting be inspired by the disciples. Filled with prayer. Constant prayer. Prayers of thanks to God. Thanks for homes. Thanks for work. Thanks for the warming weather. Thanks for the breath we just took. Thanks for those who work so hard to care for us when we are sick. Thanks for the ability to be generous in helping others.

Waiting filled with praise of Jesus and worship of God. That happens in this time when we assemble- I pray. But it is also present in those moments when we are struck speechless by the brilliant purple of a redbud tree. The Iowa countryside transforming from a uniform brown to the deep greens of corn

and soybeans. It happens when we remember to love each other as God in Jesus loved us. When we forgive one another. When we ask for forgiveness.

Waiting filled with speaking and listening to the stories from scriptures. Stories as important as the ones we tell about the rest of our family. Stories of David- a boy out of his depths who defeated the giant only when he fought his way, not like everyone else did. Stories of the faithfulness of Ruth. Stories of the father of the epileptic boy- desperate enough to bring a cure he admitted his own weakness, "I believe, help my unbelief!"

Waiting filled with wondering about how we might give witness to our encounter with Jesus. Wondering how to speak of the hope that is in us. Spending time just trying to figure out what that hope really is for us. What Jesus means- to us.

Or, maybe it is not a waiting- but a Sabbath. Another intentional moment of pause in our work. Another moment of re-creation that is centered around growing in our understanding and experience of God. The kind of Sabbath even Jesus took- to go off by himself and pray to his Abba so that... he might return and minister.

Sabbath, waiting, so that we might experience again the truth that Jesus loves us and we are his. Staying put, waiting, Sabbath. Until... but that's next week.