

The Way x17. Sunday 28 April 2019.

Waiting as God makes a Way.

READ: Luke 24: 44 – 49 and Acts 1: 1 - 8

This year through our Sunday study and reflection on Scripture we aim to see a clear thread of teaching and revelation about God showing **a way forward and a way through** that we can **follow** – whether we are journeying in an easy friendly place or the hostile, lonely wilderness. JESUS declared himself to be **the Way** (to the Father *John 14: 6*). *Acts 9: 2* His followers are described as those who ***belonged to the Way.***

The instruction of the Risen Jesus to *WAIT in the city until they are clothed with “power from on high”* doesn’t come in a vacuum. The oral history and Scriptures of the Hebrews is full of instruction about the need to WAIT for God’s empowering and timing. We often quote to one another in this church community ***Isaiah 40: 31*** *Those who wait upon the LORD will find their strength renewed. They will rise up on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.*

Every long journey (and life is a long journey) is interspersed with times of sitting and waiting or periods of rest. Journeying is not just continuous striving. Even those who run in today’s London Marathon will know the importance of resting, breathing and eating and listening to the trainer if they even want to complete the marathon – let alone win.

I don’t know if any of you watched the BBC2 TV 3-part programme ***“Pilgrimage, The Road to Rome” (Francigena)*** – 8 so called “celebrities” tackle a shortish part of the Pilgrimage including the last section to Rome. They have different faiths and beliefs from RC like Dana, ex Jehovahs, ex evangelical Christian, a Jew, a Muslim.... to an Atheist who doesn’t do religion. This shows the issues each face on the way and the degree to which they walk the road as individuals and where they are able to work as a team or community. What it did highlight to me was that on the last stretch 2 of the men (ex Jehovah and outspoken atheist) who were physically fitter had decided to compete with one another to do the stretch of the journey as fast as they could – essentially to out pace the others. In doing this of course they were avoiding the steady pace and the pauses for reflection and dialogue even with themselves which is designed to happen on any pilgrimage: it is not a race but a time to battle with and encounter ourselves and also leave ourselves open to encounter God or whatever surfaces.



Pilgrimage, The Road to Rome, BBC2.

In *Luke 24: 49* Jesus tells the disciples to *wait* (SIT – KATHISATE) *in the city of Jerusalem to be clothed with power so that they become witnesses to him.* And in *Acts 1: 4* Luke writes that Jesus told them to *wait for the gift they had been promised* – again

so that they could witness throughout the nations of the world (PERIMENTO – to await an event).

Question: why the delay? Was it the need for Jesus to ascend on high so that the Father would then send the Spirit? And even though Jesus did not ascend for 40 days – another 10 days elapsed before the day of Pentecost arrived.

These disciples had already experienced a measure of the Spirit's power in the locked room *John 20: 22 Receive now Holy Spirit* – the risen Jesus said to them when he appeared and breathed on them. But Pentecost was a distinct event and marked the birth of the Church – that distinct community anointed as the agent of God to witness to all the nations of the world.

So why were the disciples called upon to WAIT – why didn't Jesus ascend straight after the resurrection and then the Father could pour out the Spirit?

- Acts 1: 3 he appeared to various people and groups giving convincing proof of his bodily resurrection.
- He spent time with the disciples – talking to them about the Kingdom and no doubt helping them to see what his Kingdom wasn't.
- He spent time with the disciples – answering their questions v6.
- Luke 24:44,47. Jesus gave explanations from the *Law, the Prophets and the Psalms* about who the Messiah was. (He'd also done this with the 2 disciples on the Road to Emmaus).
- By these means changes were brought about internally in the mind and heart of the disciples – all this needed to happen if the church was to be built on Jesus and this included the foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets (*Ephesians 2: 20*).
- The community of the church needed to be a powerful, hospitable and generous community – and this is the one described in *Acts 2: 43-47 and 4: 32- 35*.

Question: what does it mean to wait upon God?

Perhaps we should just stop here and think about that.

One of the things it means is to face up to who we are – our limitations but also our potentials. We are humans made in the image of God and made to live in relationship with God and so empowered. Waiting on God encompasses being still long enough to face ourselves while in the company of God. (Sometimes we are accompanied by others and sometimes we are on our own).

Most of us will invent various activities to stop us doing this because of various fears that we have. (So, on the pilgrimage to Rome the 4 men – driven by 1 of them invented the physical challenge – perhaps to avoid looking to the inward challenge).

JESUS told the disciples to wait for a particular event that would happen in God's time BUT he was also calling them to SIT and to prepare...what did he expect them to do? We know that Simon Peter also invented a task – *John 21: 3 – I'm going fishing...* and others joined in. Jesus meets them on the beach. (Too much time thinking about what he'd done was "doing Peter's head in"! It was making him anxious.)

How good are you at waiting and particularly how good are you at waiting for God to do what he has promised? (*"I will make a way...Isaiah 43: 19).*

God can move faster than the speed of light (*he wraps himself in light as with a garment Ps 104:2*) and slower than a glacier which is never totally still. God can do things quickly or take thousands of generations to form red hot rubies in ice cold Greenland. We are told that even God rests but does not sleep. And we who are made in the image of God need to rest too. **Jesus tells his disciples not to act without the anointing of God's Spirit. We are told not to act simply from human eagerness, strength or planning.**

As they begin to believe that Jesus is alive and indeed the Messiah they ask: **Acts 1: 6 & 7. Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?** Jesus' answer is totally clear – ***the times and seasons are set only by God who has authority and it's not for you to know when they will be.***

The Disciples need to learn to wait – for particular events (*) but also to encounter God through the Spirit and for the changes that brings. Sometimes receiving the Spirit is very much an event to be remembered but it is always within the context of a developing relationship between us and God, us becoming more integrated as people but also with an outward focus of the World and mission to witness.

(*) e.g. creation and the Spirit within us waiting for us to come into our full inheritance as children of God. (There are many other verses in the Scriptures about waiting).

HOW do we learn to develop and sustain an attitude of sitting and waiting with expectant trust for God to make us aware of his presence and touch us by the Spirit? What did the disciples do as they waited for the promise of God? Fret? Discuss? Argue? Spring clean? Go fishing? **Or stop and think about all that had happened since they'd met Jesus? Learning to reflect on what has passed** – even just the day before...*those who wait on God – seek to listen and ponder – will renew inner strength and rise up. (Acts – 30 years of church history – a lot of walking, sailing and no wind, house arrest and the like... slow down...be still and know that I AM God...*

One thing they did as they waited...***they were together in one place. Acts 2: 1.*** They practiced real time church! *When brothers and sisters are together in unity this is where God commands a blessing. Psalm 133: 1.*

WAITING – learning to develop a patient trust...by this means God makes a way.