

Trinity Sunday

7th June 2020

Isaiah 40:12-17,27-end

Matthew 28.16-20

Reflection one: Waiting upon God

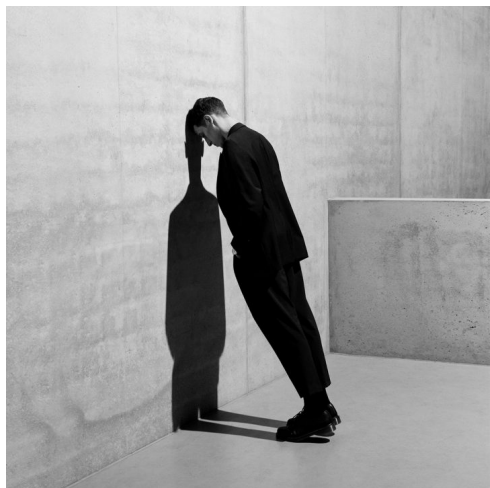
‘Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but **those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength**, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.’

Isaiah 40: 28-31

What comes to mind when you think of waiting? I typed waiting into a google image search and here are some of the images that came top of the list, prompting an association of emotions and feelings.

Frustration...



Exhaustion

¹ The Art of Waiting, photographed by [André Hemstedt & Tine Reimer](https://www.ignant.com/2018/12/12/the-art-of-waiting/), IGNANT Studio, accessed 28 May 2020, <https://www.ignant.com/2018/12/12/the-art-of-waiting/>.



2

Boredom



3

Anxious – unable to focus on anything else, while waiting for that phone to ring, that email or text message to come through.



4

² Kaitlin McCready, accessed 28 May 2020, <https://blog.hyland.com/businessmen-sleeping-in-waiting-room/>.

³ Abigail Brown, Accessed 28 May 2020, https://abidingwithjoyinchrist.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/img_7641.jpg.

⁴ Accessed 28 May 2020, <https://clientinsight.ca/waiting-for-customer-feedback-go-and-get-it/>.



Waiting for exam results or test results, to be called through from the waiting room in the doctors or dentists or for a job interview.



Powerless?

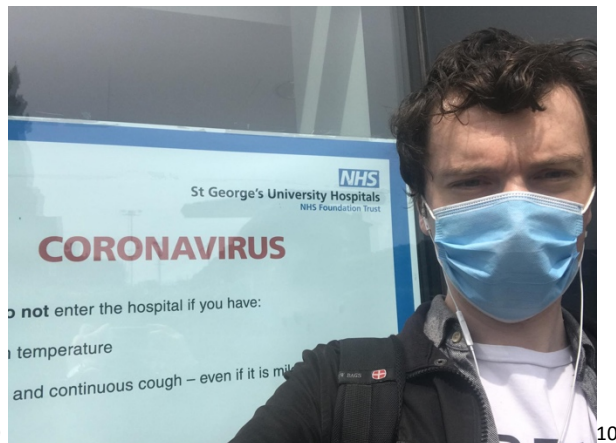
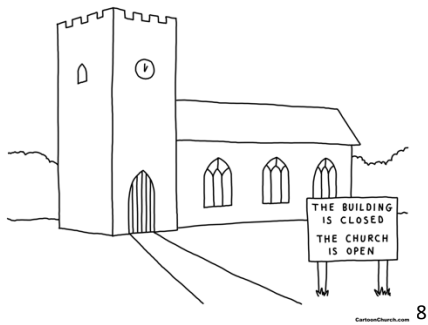
I'm sure that at some point in our lives we will have all experienced waiting. Perhaps at the moment we are more acutely aware of waiting. Waiting to enter a shop. Waiting for things to get back to normal. Waiting to be able to physically enter our church buildings and worship together. Waiting for justice. Waiting for a vaccine to be found for Covid-19. Waiting for restrictions to be lifted so we can hug family and friends.



⁵ Accessed 28 May 2020, https://www.reddit.com/r/JackSucksAtLife/comments/a7p402/jack_im_gonna_eat_an_eggplant_but_this_is_what/.

⁶ Accessed 28th May 2020, http://blog.tutorhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/shutterstock_68955784.jpg.

⁷ Accessed 2 June 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-52051322>.



⁸ ©Dave Walker, Cartoon Church, Accessed 2 June 2020, <https://cartoonchurch.com/content/cc/church-building-closed/#more-2677>

⁹ Accessed 2 June 2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8374007/Hundreds-Black-Lives-Matter-activists-chanting-breathe-gather-Trafalgar-Square.html>

¹⁰ Accessed 2 June 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/coronavirus-vaccine-uk-volunteer-experience-oxford-trial-lockdown-a9542676.html>

¹¹ Accessed 2 June 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/things-miss-coronavirus-normal-feel/story?id=69746289>

Frustration, anger, pain, lethargy, exhaustion, brain fog, inertia, anxiety. Emotions and states of being we might have felt in our lives when waiting, particularly during these last few weeks of prolonged Covid induced lockdown. It strikes me that these are all negative associations with waiting, and if you are like me, and not very good at being patient, then waiting certainly doesn't seem to be a positive state or something to be desired.

A conversation I had with a tutor whilst training for ordination helped expand my associations with the word 'waiting'. And of course it has something to do with food! Waiter and Waitresses are those who's profession it is to 'wait.' Whilst mulling this over the following British sitcom came to mind.... This clip really is a presentation of how not to under-take the phenomenally tough job of being a waiter or waitress.



12

To do a really good job of being a professional 'waiter' involves a complete mindset of hospitality. And that is what this image speaks of. This is the infamous Rublev Icon of the Trinity, which is also known as the 'Hospitality of Abraham'. This icon is based on the account in Genesis 18:1-15 of the Lord appearing to Abraham, in the form of three mysterious figures, who Abraham immediately sets about *waiting* upon, by enlisting the help of his wife Sarah to pull out all the stops and prepare a deluxe meal for them.

¹² Screenshot, Accessed 2 June 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_lzk_bPilc.



13

We heard in our Isaiah reading the words: **Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.** At first reading this sounds counter-intuitive, the frazzled waiter Manuel from our clip in *Faulty Towers* certainly doesn't seem to renew his strength in his occupation of

¹³ *Trinity* also called *The Hospitality of Abraham* (Andrei Rublev) 1411 or 1425–27, Icon, accessed 27 May 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_\(Andrei_Rublev\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_(Andrei_Rublev)).

professionally waiting. But perhaps the key is in the object of our waiting, *who* we are waiting upon.

Waiting on human beings or on circumstances outside of our control can be fraught with frustration and angst, particularly in a time of global pandemic and as we feel that righteous anger at racial hatred and prejudice, waiting upon governments and institutions to enact justice.

But to wait upon God; that is a different kind of waiting, a waiting more associated with the noble hospitality profession, that of Abraham in Genesis, waiting upon the Creator who brought all things into being, the Spirit who hovered over the water, the WORD who spoke life into existence; this kind of waiting, is the opposite of the frustrating human waiting, it is life-giving, abundant life giving.

And what does this waiting upon God look like? Just as the talented waiter or waitress watches and listens attentively to the guests needs and responds accordingly. We actively wait upon God, looking and listening attentively to the Word of God and the sign language and signals, the motions of God, whispered by the Spirit, in order to respond to the Father. And if we were tempted to think that it all sounds like too much effort, we are enticed by a promise.

Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'

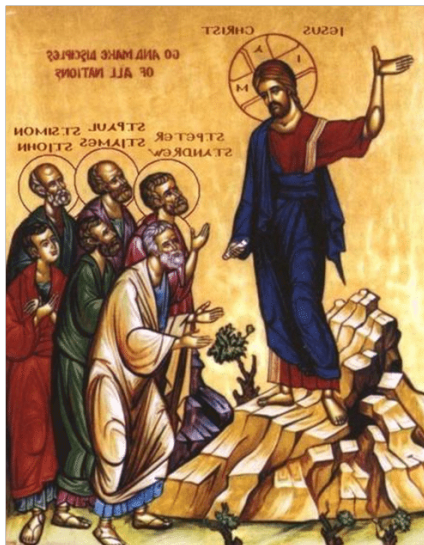
The Hebrew word for wait used in this verse, means to look for, to expectantly hope for, to patiently linger and to trustfully rest in. In a time of global fatigue, when our cups are running dry of energy, both young and old, exhausted and powerless, we find that if we take that time to attend to God, to attentively wait upon and listen to, in the empty space offered in the Rublev icon, we find that our cups start to fill with living water. We gain a transformed perspective, a calmed Spirit, to keep going, not in our own strength, but carried by the everlasting arms of our heavenly Father.



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I'm now going to play a modern hymn, which is based on these verses we have pondered in Isaiah, feel free to join in with the words, or use it as a space to patiently linger and let the words wash over you as a prayer.

Reflection Two: Waiting upon God



15

'Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. **When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.'**

Matthew 28:16-17.

¹⁴ Wings Like Eagles Isaiah 40 31 Christian Message T-Shirt Mug, screenshot, accessed 27 May 2020, <https://www.teepublic.com/en-gb/mug/7216932-wings-like-eagles-isaiah-40-31-christian-message-t>

¹⁵ Accessed 27 May 2020, <https://spiritualfoodforthesoul.wordpress.com/2017/05/28/gospel-mt-2816-20/>.

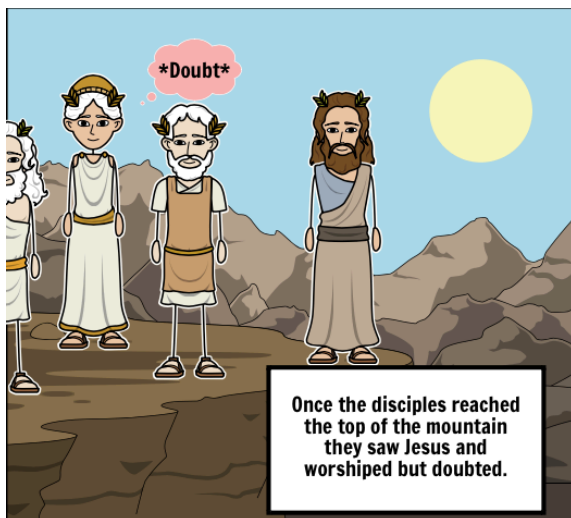


16

It appears that like Manuel some of the disciples thought that the meals with Jesus were over, finished, kaput. Life as they knew it had ended.

The Greek word used by Matthew which is translated in our gospel reading as 'to doubt' means to waiver, to hesitate. It's a kind of inactive waiting, a state of being unsure of whether or not to act. I love Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of our gospel passage in The Message bible: 'The moment they saw him they worshipped him. Some, though, *held back*, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally.' (Matthew 28:17)

The gospel reading doesn't tell us who out of the 11 disciples held-back, who wasn't quite sure. I love this cartoon because it points to the inner reality where faith and questioning can co-exist. Where we can worship but still be un-sure.



17

Peterson's rendering of the verse as some of the disciples holding back, puts it because they weren't sure about risking themselves fully. Giving themselves totally over to God and his ways and purposes in the world. And maybe they were right to be wary, because Jesus comes right out and then gives them the infamous assignment, known as the great commission.

¹⁶ Screenshot, Accessed 9 June 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJ4U5tQ6Ke8>.

¹⁷ Screenshot, © Hayley Foote and Kayla Boewe, by 1994439f, updated 28/9/2018, accessed 27 May 2020, <https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboards/1994439f/matthew-28-16-202>.



Therefore...

GO

and **MAKE DISCIPLES** of
all nations, **BAPTIZING THEM**
in the name of the **Father**
and of the **Son**
and of the **Holy Spirit**,
and **TEACHING THEM**
to obey everything
i have commanded you.
and surely
i am with you always.
to the very end of the age.”

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04-16-2015

18

19

That was no mean feat! They were being commissioned to invite people to God’s banquet. But like the Isaiah reading it comes with a promise: ‘I will be with you always, to the end of the age.’ (Matthew 28:20) Jesus doesn’t give his followers a solo assignment, he promises to be with them always. How is that possible when Jesus is about to ascend back to the right-hand of the Father? Because of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promises that he and the Father will come and make their home within his followers (John 14:23).



20

This commission and promise was not just for those first 11 disciples. It is for us too.

¹⁸ Screenshot, The Great Commission (2020), He Qi, accessed 27 May 2020, https://www.heqiart.com/store/p217/The_Great_Commission_.html#

¹⁹ © 2015 PH121 Today, Tomorrow, & Forever & Gayle J. Thorn, accessed 27 May 2020, <https://secretariatgat.wixsite.com/ph121-ttforever/post/2019/02/06/wednesday-at-the-well-matthew-2816-20-tell-everyone>

²⁰ [Nalini Jayasuriya](https://www.omsc.org), *The Great Commission* (2002), <https://www.omsc.org>, accessed 27 May 2020, <https://tillchrist.wordpress.com/tag/great-commission-2/>

Inviting people into a life of feasting with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which leads to an eternal banquet, where instead of his followers waiting on Him, amazingly, God will invite them to sit down and feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and humbly come to serve them! (Matthew 8:11, Luke 12:35-37).



21



22

After today we enter the period of the churches calendar called ordinary time. I think this period of time stretching in the churches calendar up to November and Advent, won't feel like ordinary time at all, as we are in this liminal waiting space of lockdown.

But perhaps we can use this time to wait upon God. To not hide our pain or frustrations, or anger at the injustice, racism and hatred in the world, but to bring all of that before God as we wait.

But maybe during this time of lockdown, finding time to wait upon God is tough if living and working under the same roof as lots of other people. Maybe it looks like waiting upon God when you get 5 minutes to yourself, if you get five minutes to yourself, in the bathroom. Maybe it looks like waiting for God's voice going for a run, maybe it looks like waiting upon God as you brush your child's hair, or make a meal.

Or perhaps Lockdown has given more time, more space. And so maybe now is the time to spend more time searching the scriptures, taking the opportunity to join a study group to pray and study the bible with others waiting on God.

And maybe during this time of waiting, it's a chance to invite others into God's restaurant, which thankfully is nothing like the hap hazard restaurant run by Basil Faulty from our clips,

²¹ [Nalini Jayasuriya](https://www.omsc.org/artist-jayasuriya), *The Gift of the Gospel*, 1993, accessed 9 June 2020, <https://www.omsc.org/artist-jayasuriya>.

²² Steve Thomason, accessed 27 May 2020, <https://www.stevethomason.net/2015/04/16/messy-life-together-a-sermon-on-the-great-commission-from-matthew-2816-20/>

to invite others into the best commission of a lifetime, a life spent waiting upon the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with the best promise that this kind of waiting will be rewarded with a renewed energy, perspective and strength to carry on, and the hope of an eternal banquet with the Trinity.