

Sermon May 24th

This is the 7th Sunday of Easter - the day between the Ascension and Pentecost. Our reading today from Acts recounts the ascension. We have the re-telling of the story that ended the Gospel of Luke. The ascension leads to the establishment of the Church in Jerusalem. The 50 days of Easter are coming to an end.

The verses we read today are part of the narrative of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will culminate at Pentecost. Jesus' last words to his disciples, his ascension and the promise that something is going to happen.

The disciples ask a question that we also want to know. Lord is this the time that you will restore Israel? Jesus does not give them a timeline - only says - time is up to God - its not for you to know.

I think this is a question we may have all been asking for the past 2 months or so. When will things be restored? What is the timeline? When?

After Jesus tells the disciples that time is up to God we are told that he ascended into heaven. The disciples are left.

It looks a little like the end of a parade or a concert - the event is over - but there are still people standing around not really sure where to go or what comes next.

The Book of Acts tells us that suddenly there were 2 men in white robes beside them. And these heavenly messengers basically tell them to move along - there is nothing to see here - nothing going on. The action is over here. The disciples are in the wrong place. Its time to go back to Jerusalem.

This is where the action will be next. This is where something is going to happen.

But what? The disciples longed for Jesus to return. There was a sense of anticipation. What were they waiting for? They did not really know - only that it was probably going to be very special.

So as they waited they remained together and they devoted themselves to prayer.

We too are waiting. We are waiting for some big things and some little things. We are waiting for Covid 19 to end. And we too are waiting for Jesus to return and for the Holy Spirit to remain with us - guiding our congregation - and us.

I asked you to share with me some of the things you are waiting for and here are some of the things you shared with me.

For health to improve

For a new career

For fulfillment of a dream

For a return to normal

For a return to a normal work schedule

For a haircut

For browsing in a mall

To see people

To go out just to get a loaf of bread or something small

To wander in a library or bookstore

To go to yoga

To go to a senior's fitness group

To hug parents

To play with friends

To go to a beach or park

To hold hands

To hug a friend

To sing

What are we waiting for? We are waiting for the day when we can all worship together again in Church.

This is our longing. This is the deep longing that we all share. This is what we are waiting for and like the disciples distanced from others in the upper room while they waited we too are devoting ourselves to prayer.

This morning on the day where we hover between the story of the ascension and the celebration of Pentecost I think we need to acknowledge that not only are we waiting we are grieving.

We are grieving for the loss of what was. We may be grieving for the loss of what should have been, could have been, might have been.

Before we can imagine a future without covid 19 - without social and physical distancing we need to grieve for what has been lost.

We need to give ourselves permission to lament. The Psalmists did.

We have spent many days trying to keep our spirits up. Telling one another that we are doing well or are ok. The truth is we are not ok and we are not well. We may be remaining healthy and safe. But things are not that good.

We have all lost something - or many things.
And we need to acknowledge the losses and give ourselves permission to grieve.

It is important to lament all the things we have lost and are losing - all of it.

And it is important to let ourselves feel the grief and all of the emotions that go with it.

We are like the disciples tucked away in the upper room. Not sure what is coming next - a little fearful of what life is going to look like and recognizing that it might not be the way it was. Maybe we are feeling a sense of immobility or lethargy - there is lots to do but we just do not feel like doing it. Have we lost our sense of purpose?
All of this is part of our loss and our grief.

What comes next?

For us Pentecost comes next. For us the time will come soon when we pray Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit - transform us, remain with us, take our grief and our fears and our loss and make us the body of Christ in the world. Come Holy Spirit and help us bring the WORD and the words.

We pray like the disciples did in the upper room. We pray as we wait.

We pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for understanding, for wisdom and the strength to go on. We pray in hope and fear in faith and doubt.

We pray.

AMEN