

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:2-3 NRSV
What Are We Waiting For?
WRCoB 12.15.19

What are we waiting for?

On a scale of minor irritation

We wait through three red lights to make a left turn

Or we wait with the flu in the doctor's office

Or we wait for our team to win the Superbowl.

On a more serious level

We wait for a nasty disagreement to be over.

We wait for test results from a biopsy.

We wait for courage

To fight nagging personal problems.

From the wars raging within us . . .

Stress, anxiety, depression and despair.

We wait.

On a much broader scale

In the world around us, as did Habakkuk

We see the violence and injustices around us.

We see the madness of gun violence and mass killings.
Innocent people gunned down in crossfire

A 2-year-old boy just this past week in Richmond

Two weeks ago, a woman firefighter
Protecting her 5-year-old in Chesterfield

Countless young men of color shot down in gang violence.

We wait in solidarity with the bereaved.

We wait for the peace promised in Christ Jesus.

From the wars raging . . .
Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen
Terrorism, ethnic conflicts
Domestic abuse

We wait.

Violence and injustices perpetuated by racism
Xenophobia and misogyny.

We wait.

Sometimes waiting gets so very heavy on our hearts
That deep within our souls
We want to scream like Habakkuk

“How long, O Lord, must we call for help
But you do not listen?”

“How long, must we cry out to you, ‘violence!’
But you do not save?”

“How long must we wait?”

~~

Habakkuk lived in the turbulent times

Between the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC
And the fall of the Southern Kingdom in 587 BC.

The Assyrian army had swept down from the north

Destroying one city after another
Brutally killing men, women, and children.

And then, not long after that,

The Babylonians struck the southern Kingdom
Destroying the city of Jerusalem
Forcing the people into exile.

Violence, injustice and destruction surrounded Habakkuk.

And he begged God to do something about it!

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Habakkuk questions why God would allow evil to exist.

There's a word for it: theodicy.

1

Theodicy is the

"answer to the question of why God permits evil".

Theodicy seeks to explain why a perfectly good

All-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving God permits evil.

Habakkuk wants to know why.

He stands watch and waits for God to answer.

And God answers!

2

Habakkuk 2:3 (CEV)

**³At the time I have decided, my words will come true.
You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a
long time, but keep on waiting—it will happen!**

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That's not the answer we're looking for!

Wait? Be patient?

It may take a long time?

But keep on waiting?

No!

I look around, as did Habakkuk

And I see terrible injustices

I see horrible things happening . . .

I see ignorance overwhelming truth . . .

And I think, can it get any worse?

And I pray for God to intercede!

“How long, Lord, will all this violence continue

And you do nothing to stop it?”

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The week before Thanksgiving

We hosted one of the Chibok girls, Deborah.

She was one of the fortunate ones.

On the night of the abduction
From the Chibok Girls Secondary School
April 14, 2014

She was one of 276 girls
Captured and taken away
In the darkness of night
By the dreaded Boko Haram.

The following morning she and a friend saw the chance
And escaped by fleeing into the bush
And making their way back home.

Others were less fortunate.

There are parents waiting now 5 ½ years
For news of the 112 remaining girls still in captivity.

A journalist with links to Boko Haram
Claims that only 15 of the 112 remain alive.

How agonizing a wait it must be.

Over 90% of the captured girls were members
Of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.

There are thousands of Brethren in Nigeria
Living in IDP camps in various places
Waiting to return to their homes

Waiting for years for it to be safe enough
To return to their homes and previous lives.

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Honestly, whether we like it or not
And personally, I don't like it at all
Waiting is a part of the Christian faith.

It is a spiritual discipline.

3

Psalm 130:5 (NRSV)

**⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope**

4

Micah 7:7 (NRSV)

**⁷ But as for me, I will look to the Lord,
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.**

5

Romans 8:23 (NRSV)

**²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have
the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait
for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.**

6

Galatians 5:5 (NRSV)

**⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the
hope of righteousness.**

The Bible is full of people waiting for God's redemption.

God says in Habakkuk the righteous shall live by faith.

Faith that God in his infinite wisdom
Will guide the course of history to its redemptive end.

Ultimately then, what do we wait for?
We wait for salvation!

For God to save us from our untenable circumstances.

For peace to reign in our hearts
And in our relationships

For peace on earth, good will toward all!

The righteous shall live by faith
Faith that God will have the final say!

Isn't that what we are waiting for!
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Which brings us around to Advent.

As did Habakkuk, we find ourselves in turbulent times.

Though we cry out to God to intercede
The Season of Advent teaches us to wait.

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I don't know about you
But I struggle a bit with understanding Advent.

Just what are we waiting for?

There are three levels in our waiting in Advent.

In Advent, we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus
The way we celebrate the birthdays in our own lives.

Just ask the children how hard it is to wait for Christmas.

Every year when Christmas comes
We celebrate the birthday of our Lord Jesus.

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But wait! No pun intended!

There is a second level to waiting.

In Advent, we wait for a spiritual birth.

For Jesus to be born within us
When we can enjoy the inner peace and joy
That saves and sustains us through this life.

~~

But wait! There's yet another level to all of this.

In Advent, we wait for Christ to come again

We wait for the time
When God redeems and restores all of creation.

~~

The Catholics speak of Advent in the same way

7

- Christ comes in history
- Christ comes in mystery
- Christ comes in majesty.

In Advent, we prepare to celebrate Christ's historical birth.

An actual, historical event

That happened on the timeline of humanity

In Advent, we anticipate Christ coming in mystery.

To be born in our hearts

Here and now

Through the presence of his Spirit.

And in Advent, we anticipate Christ coming in majesty

To complete the work of God's

Final act of redemption.

In Advent, we recognize Christ coming

In history, in mystery, and in majesty.

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We live between Christ's first and the second coming.

We live in the ambiguity of "already/but not yet"

God inaugurates his kingdom's reign in Christ's first coming.

This is the "already" part.

But God's kingdom will not reach its fulfillment

Until Christ returns.

This is the "not yet" part.

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The beginning of God's final act of redemption
Is in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels, shepherds, and wise men recognized it.

But the end of God's final act of redemption
Is completed when Christ comes again.

In the meanwhile . . .

We practice the spiritual discipline of waiting.

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But wait!

Waiting is not just sitting around for God to do something!
We must not sit idly by waiting for God to intervene.

Waiting is an active thing.

8

**Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV). . . 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.**

From the Jewish Talmud

9

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now!

Love mercy, now!

Walk humbly, now!

*You are not obligated to complete the work,
But neither are you free to abandon it!*

So while we wait in the already/not yet zone of Advent
We continue the work of Jesus
Peacefully, simply and together.

And even though turbulent times are with us
Though violence and injustice are all around

Though it feels at times, the Evil One has the upper hand

Let's remember, God's got this!

10

Habakkuk 3:18-19 (NRSV)

¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord;

I will exult in the God of my salvation.

¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;

**he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.**

So what are we waiting for?