

WEEKLY SERMON

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What are we waiting for?

Sometimes I think preachers overdo talk about waiting – especially when they preach in the days between Ascension and Pentecost. Of course, waiting is a big part of the Christian life. As Christians each day we reset our hearts to “wait for (God’s) Son from heaven” (1 Thess 1:10) and we “wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:23)

We wait because we have been given the hope that our fractured world will not always be as it is now. In the end the sin and suffering and sickness that blight our present age will be consigned to history, and through Christ everything will be made new. So certainly, in the heart of every Christian, there needs to be a willingness to be patient and wait.

But we forget that the Christ who says, “Wait” is also the Christ who says, “Now is the time.” For sure, the Book of Acts begins with the risen Jesus telling his disciples to wait. He says, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised.” (Acts 1:4) And on reading this, many a preacher will get the itch to preach a sermon on waiting for the Holy Spirit. The congregation is then told to be expectant and to wait for God’s Spirit to show them what needs doing and how and when it’s to be done.

But the preacher overlooks what happened in Acts 2. The wait for the Holy Spirit soon ended on the Day of Pentecost. At most that particular wait in the Bible only lasted a few weeks after which Christ started saying, “Now.” Now was the time for his people to proclaim the good news about him. Now was the time for hearers to repent and be baptised. It was even dangerous to wait.

One of the problems with the lock-down is that it’s made us into a church that is simply waiting – waiting for our buildings to re-open – waiting for our services to restart. But the message of Pentecost is “Now.” In the power of the Spirit now is the time to tell our communities of Jesus by whatever means we can – Youtube, Zoom, telephone, old-fashioned parish magazine and even sending a letter or talking to our neighbours (outside at 2 metres!). It may be that we’ll discover that people are more ready to listen than we to speak.

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