



August 10 – Waiting

One of the things that I have learned in the last 20 years in ministry is that it is all about interruptions. It is almost without fail that when I get into a project and everything starts clicking, that is when the phone rings or something happens that needs attention. Other times, it is when I am busy writing a sermon and the Spirit is flowing and then an email comes in or there is a knock on the office door. In fact, right now I was writing this, someone knocked on the office door.

Earlier in the ministry, this would upset me. I was trying to get things done after all. Now, I see it as a blessing. It keeps me from viewing myself or my role as too important. A pastor without a flock is, well, not a pastor. It is about interruptions.

This text speaks of staying alert and ready, waiting for the ultimate interruption as God arrives. It speaks to the truth that everything in this world, all of the worries, fears, and work, all of the accolades and accomplishments, all of it, in the end, is penultimate. None of it will last. We are to stay focused on God.

There is nothing easy about waiting. This is especially true in an impatient world. In fact, I would venture to guess that this text is unnerving to most of us. There is something about our culture that makes us hear this as a fear based lesson. We need to stay vigilant and ready. We do not want to get caught unprepared when the time comes. If you encounter this story and feel a little anxiety, you are not alone. I think most of us hear it that way. There are things that are lost in this text when we allow fear to be the lens through which we interpret it. It starts with “Do not be afraid” but we have heard that before. It is the next line that strikes me as incredibly powerful. “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That is not a line based in shame or fear. It is the exact opposite. It speaks of the tender love that God has for humanity, enough that God is not only willing, but takes great joy in giving us this kingdom. This is not because we deserve it. It is because of God’s love for us. The text invites us to remember times when we too have witnessed this gracious God. It asks us to remember the ways that God has journeyed with us as a broken humanity. God’s walk with humanity is not centered in shame and fear. It is rooted in love. It invites us to think about times when we have witnessed the grace and love of God. I invite you to think about that now, or throughout the day. Allow those memories to be an interruption of God’s love amid the busyness of life.

The other piece that is often lost when we view the text out of fear is the fact that it is God who prepares the midnight meal. It is not asking that we are ready to host God at a moment’s notice. Nope. It speaks of God fastening the apron and cooking the meal. Have you ever thought of it that way? When we allow culture to convince us we should be fear filled, we lose sight of the fact that God takes great pleasure in being ready for us. The great interruption in this week’s text focuses not on the demands of an overly scheduled life, but on God, who comes in surprising ways to offer comfort, assurance, and lasting treasure. Sometimes, those are big interruptions and create these mountaintop experiences in the faith journey. Other times they are small, and create moments of peace in a busy world. Our task is to be open-minded enough to witness it.

Unless God is extremely punctual and predictable, it probably won’t always be during this hour on Sunday mornings. The text is an invitation to keep your eyes, ears, and heart open to the interruptions of God. Where might we look to see the kind of God that dons an apron and serves a surprise meal? Where might we be more intentional about staying alert to the grace of God?

If we get caught up in the worries of this world, we forget to keep our eyes, ears, and heart open to witness God’s love in the world. Stay alert. Do not be afraid. God loves you. Amen.

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