

A Sermon by the Very Rev. Dr. Renée Tembeckjian

Trinity Episcopal Church

7 August 2022

Proper 14C: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-6; Luke 12:32-40

“Waiting and Ready”

Across countless conversations over the years with parishioners, family, and friends, I cannot help but notice how often the subject turns to matters of deep concern – personal, political, financial, medical, and spiritual.

This is not unique, of course. In every age, generation, and culture, our human experience is often marked, and even marred, by the many and complex dimensions of fear and worry. As Charlie Brown once observed, “Even my anxieties have anxieties.”

As we try to understand our circumstances, resolve conflicts, and overcome obstacles, some of us will fret, others will pray, and still others will set out to “fix” whatever (or whoever) it is. But no matter how we respond individually, we will all, at some point, find ourselves waiting, wondering when the time of fulfillment will come. When will be the hour?

So much of this life is taken with waiting...and we do not always wait well. We look for the shortest line at a store or theatre. Our lightning-fast technology is now not fast enough. We are irritated when our food is slow to arrive or a pilot announces that we are fifth for take-off. And when a vending machine or elevator is slow, a *lot* of buttons get pushed – both the machine’s *and* ours.<sup>i</sup>

Waiting is hard enough, but when our hopes and dreams are on the line, we may become discouraged or despairing. We might envy or resent the joy of others, or sink into resignation, chalking it up to fate. It may feel naïve to have hope, and we may even wonder if God is anywhere in the picture at all.

In today’s Hebrew scripture, it is Abram and Sarai who are discouraged and despairing. Having waited so long for a child, they do the math and logically conclude that they have run out of time. Sarai sets out to “fix it” by arranging an heir through her maidservant, because it seems utterly foolish to keep hoping, when the future is so obviously bleak.

And yet, somehow, in the midst of his despair, as tempted as Abram may have been “get real” and resign himself to a future unfulfilled, he experiences the presence and promise of God – a divinely inspired reassurance that what he sees is *not* all there is.

*Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.*

*So shall your descendants be.*

As reassuring as this was for Abram personally, it turns out that the divine promise was unimaginably larger than he ever would have imagined ...because God imagined a human family far beyond just one name, one house, one people, or even just one faith.

For Abram will now be called Abraham – the so-called Father of Nations. He will become the common ancestral root for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – all of which revere him. And so, it seems that in the divine promise of new life and possibility, what we imagine and long to have, is always surpassed by what God imagines and longs to give.

As it happens, Abraham is not the only one with good news in today's readings. Even if, as Charlie Brown said, our anxieties have anxieties, Jesus offers this word of reassurance::

*Do not be afraid, little flock,  
for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Now, some folks in the Christian world love to interpret this quote include this quote to justify a theology of "name it and claim it" – that if we will just set aside our worries and fears, God will give us "the kingdom" – which is code for personal power, a whole lot of stuff, and a hefty bank account to go with. Thing is, Jesus goes on to say this:

*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The kingdom that *God* imagines for us is a world where treasure of the heart prevails over any other currency. We are called to help create a human family larger, more equitable, and more diverse than we may ever have imagined, to live into a vision of divine blessing as vast as the uncountable number of stars in the heavens above old Abram's head – under which *all* of creation may equally live without anxiety, breathe without worry...and dare to love without fear.

But when we look around our world right now and "do the math," like Abraham and Sarah did, it seems naïve to hope. We may well be tempted, like Abram, to "get real" and resign ourselves to a future bleak and unfulfilled. With so much evidence to the contrary, how long will we have to wait for to see such blessing? When will be the hour?

Turns out, Jesus calls us to do *more* than wait:

*Sell your possessions and give alms.  
Make for yourselves purses that do not wear out.  
Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit...*

In other words, by our own unique and varied ways, we must actively make ready to *receive* that blessing, not only for ourselves, but for all persons and the whole of creation.

No matter what we are worried or anxious about in this life – personally, politically, or spiritually – the wisdom of scripture invites our trust in a God of Love who does not punish us, but longs to bless us – lavishly, abundantly, and eternally – and we, my friends, are the human vehicle for that divine blessing.

So don't just sit around and wait. Be dressed for action. Have your lamps lit.

In other words, help make ready...and this *will* be the hour.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Thanks to Brett Younger, Plymouth Church, Brooklyn