



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Waiting with God

Rev. Louise Rogers

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But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak,¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.¹⁵ Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,¹⁸ because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 4: 13 – 5:1).

Last weekend Bill and I took a few days to visit Boston. He often goes there for business but it was my first time so we spent time as tourists. When in Boston one of the best tourist attractions is the Freedom Trail. We had fun walking along the path connecting historic sites from the American Revolution, sites like the Old North Church and Paul Revere’s house. Our final stop was Kings Chapel where we listened to the short docent tour about life in the small congregation. After our tour we walked along the sidewalk when I heard another tourist say, “I am so disappointed; look at this church- just a bunch of stones

piled up, not much to look at from out here. Let's just skip this one." I thought you really should go inside - you are missing so much just looking at the outside of the church. Inside you will discover a beautiful period chapel designed with Georgian architecture complete with old fashioned pews and beautiful woodwork. You are missing marvelous history depicting the spirit of patriots recorded inside. Mostly you will be missing the spirit of God who has moved the hearts of people for over 300 years in that place- an active congregation, they are still meeting today for worship. All of this is not evident from the outside, you had to go inside and look deeper for there are truths worth exploring not readily seen. Truths which are important and eternal.

The Apostle Paul invites us to ponder eternal truths today in our scripture lesson. How can we have confidence like Paul in God's presence in places not seen? Where is God to be found? Bede Griffiths is a Benedictine monk who traveled around the world asking people "Where is God". He asked people from different cultures and various faiths around the globe. He discovered Christians in the West would point outside of themselves towards what was for them heaven. Heaven, is our final resting place, our eternal hope after death and the location for the resurrected Christ. Here we find God. Paul reassures us that the spirit that raised Jesus will indeed raise us too! Paul became an apostle when he saw for himself the resurrected Lord exalted in glory in heaven. Throughout his writings he shares his experience of heaven as a place of glory beyond what we can see and ever completely imagine. That sighting into heaven secured his faith and transformed his life as he shares with us. Glimpses into heaven happen to ordinary people today.

When I was a seminary student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, I was enrolled in a class called “Death and Loss” part of the Pastoral Care curriculum. One of my fellow students asked if his father could come and speak to our class to share his personal story. His father was a long serving pastor who had a near death experience, the student thought the story of his father’s experience would be helpful for us, aspiring pastors. A few weeks later Al came to speak to the class. He humbling began his story saying that we were academic students who could challenge his account but he had come to honestly share his story with us. He began with his medical background of a chronic illness. He condition grew worse during one particular time and he was in the hospital very ill. He was sick to the point of death and immobilized in the hospital. At a certain point he felt transported, moved and he could look down on himself. Eventually he found himself in a new place, a place he called heaven. I recall him saying, “I have seen the glory of God with my own eyes. My senses were overcome; the colors were so vivid in heaven. The grass was lush and the color was a vivid green inviting you to walk around. The music was beautiful, familiar to me but unlike anything I had heard on earth. Yes, I saw people who I knew from my life. I was surrounded by warmth and a sense of love.” Al shared more details with us concluding that he had been surrounded by the glory of God. Then the time came for him to return to earth. (After all he was with us telling us this story.) He closed by saying, “I have to admit I did not want to return to earth. That is hard to admit with my son sitting here with me.” From that time he viewed his life differently. The glory gave him confidence and renewed his hope in God- as we heard from the Apostle Paul too. The glory secured his faith. Eventually each one of us will have our own story to tell for each of us now *lives in the earthly tent but one day will move*

to the building, a house made not with hands eternal in the heavens.

The hope we have in the life everlasting encourages our life here and now too. We trust that God is present with us personally through the spirit. The one who has rescued us in the past will continue to lead us, guide us and rescue us. Jim read from Psalm 130 earlier in the service. One of the beautiful aspects of the Psalms is that they capture our human circumstance. The divine word of God seems to speak personally to us. We discover the Psalmist is standing, *waiting, waiting as those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. He will not be disappointed in his waiting.* For God is present with us in the spirit renew us day by day.

Waiting is so much a part of our lives. We are experts in waiting. Ordinary times of waiting include waiting at stop signs, or waiting in lines at the grocery stores. Then we experience the challenging periods of waiting that test our souls; times like when we are told to have a seat in the doctor's office waiting room for the lab result. We wait for the word of forgiveness from loved ones. We wait for the house to sell to begin a new chapter in our life. These are just a few examples of hard and long times of waiting. Important to remember that we may sit alone, yet in our waiting we are never apart from God. God waits with us. God is present with us through the Holy Spirit. In our waiting we can turn to God, ask the Lord where are you working in my in us, in our world? We learn to trust the resurrected Lord, the psalmist and the church who all wait with us. Faith calls us to watch with hope when we cannot see the way ahead.

Children help us to see in new and refreshing ways. A Mother was putting her child to bed. "Where did you see

God today” she asked her little one? The child thinks for a few moments and then says I saw God in the park when the old couple held hands and walked along the path, I saw God when you kissed me, I saw God when I got to play with my friends.

God is love and we too find God when discover love from the Lord and shared with one another. May our hearts be opened so that our pray to the Lord may be On my bad days I seek you. On my good days I thank you. On my great days I praise you but every day I need you. Thank you God for always being with us here and in the life to come. Amen.



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2040 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15241
412-835-6630

www.westminster-church.org