



Weekly Devotion: Transformative Waiting

April 2, 2020

Paul's words to the church in Philippi urge the believers there to keep their focus on their Christian teachings and not be swayed away by those who disregard the faith. Oh, those who keep their faith in Christ are far better off because, in the end, we are transformed from the inside out.

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

During Lent, which is only for two more weeks, we wait. But it is not a stationary or unchanging type of waiting – it is an active type of waiting. *This* waiting is about transformation...from the inside out. We eagerly await the coming of our Savior, not only because of his redemptive power but also because he completely refashions our imperfect selves to be more like his resurrected self. It is a makeover to the highest degree. Our physical bodies are vessels we live in and are precious because they are essential to life on earth, but they are not perfect vessels. We are vulnerable to sickness, injuries, emotional turmoil. These things can leave us empty and in need of change from within. We often crave the seemingly allusive feeling of wholeness, completeness. Will we wait forever?

In this season we acknowledge our brokenness through reflection and often “give up” something we enjoy as a reminder of our need for our Savior. By doing so, we often find ourselves in unexpected emotional places. We think of the loss, loneliness and rejection of Jesus and reflect on those we have lost, when we have felt or feel alone, and we remember our own times of rejection or regret over rejecting others. Will we feel lost forever?

Reread verses 20-21 in the *Amplified Bible* translation: *But [we are different, because] our citizenship is in heaven. And from there we eagerly await [the coming of] the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject everything to Himself, will [not only] transform [but completely refashion] our earthly bodies so that they will be like His glorious resurrected body.*

No – we will not wait forever nor feel lost forever! We, the believers, are continuously empowered by our faith in Christ. We are promised that the sometimes painful process of waiting leads to

transformation. The cross is transformation of pain into healing – for Jesus, for each of us. The toll this kind of transformative healing takes on us is something only our Savior can refill.

And so, we wait. We wait through coronavirus. We wait for life to feel ‘normal’ again. We wait in our frustrations over test results, or service delays or job changes. We wait alongside our families and friends. We wait for the promise and hope of Christ’s resurrection to come again. And it will! Whether we celebrate it within our church walls or our own backyards, Redemption is coming. Hold onto the hope in the waiting.

Let us pray...

Today’s prayer is an excerpt from Anne Lamott’s book, “[Help, Thanks, Wow: Three Essential Prayers](#)”. I just finished reading it and I may go back to some parts again. She’s a slightly unconventional Christian, but that’s what I love about her writing. It is so real and so genuine. I hope you agree. Or, at least, keep an open heart as you read.

God – It is all hopeless. Even for a crabby optimist like me, things couldn’t be worse. Everywhere you turn, our lives and marriages and morale and government are falling to pieces. So many friends have broken children. The planet does not seem long for this world. Repent! Oh, wait, never mind. I meant: Help.

What I wanted my whole life was relief—from pressure, isolation, people’s suffering (including my own, which was mainly mental), and entire political administrations. That is really all I want now. Besides dealing with standard-issue family crisis, heartbreak, and mishegas (Yiddish for general craziness), I feel that I can’t stand one single more death in my life. That’s too bad, because as we speak, I have a cherished thirteen-year-old cat who is near death from lymphoma. I know I won’t be able to live without her.

This is a hard planet, and we’re a vulnerable species. And all I can do is pray: Help.

When I pray, which I do many times a day, I pray for a lot of things. I ask for health and happiness for my friends, and for their children. This is okay to do, to ask God to help them have a sense of peace, and for them to feel the love of God. I pray for our leaders to act in the common good, or at least the common slightly better. I pray that aid and comfort be rushed to people after catastrophes, natural and man-made. It is also okay to ask that my cat have an easy death. Is God going to say, “Sorry, we don’t have enough for the cat”? I don’t think so.

Some of my friends’ kids are broken and their parents are living in that, and other friends’ marriages are broken, and every family I love has serious problems involving someone’s health or finances. I ask for help for this planet, and for her poor and for the suffering people in my little galaxy. I know even as I pray for help that there will be tremendous compassion, mercy, generosity, companionship, and laughter from other people in the world, and from friends, doctors, nurses, hospice people. I also know that life can be devastating, and it’s still okay to be pissed off at God: Mercy, schmercy. I always want the kid to live.

I can picture God saying: "Okay, hon. I'll be here when you're done with your list." Then He goes back to knitting new forests or helping less pissy people until I hit rock bottom. And when I finally do, there may be hope.

There's freedom in hitting bottom, in seeing that you won't be able to save or rescue your daughter, her spouse, his parents, or your career, relief in admitting you've reached the place of great unknowing. This is where restoration can begin, because when you're still in the state of trying to fix the unfixable, everything bad is engaged: the chatter of your mind, the tension of your physiology, all the trunks and wheel-ons you carry from the past. It's exhausting, crazy-making.

Help. Help us walk through this. Help us come through.

Lord, only you can.

Amen.