

Epiphany 2-January 15, 2023

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Genesis 22:1-14, Psalm 40:1-5, John 1:29-42

“Waiting Patiently” - Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Waiting patiently isn't something that is easy for many of us to do. Once you have been promised that something important is going to happen, waiting for it can seem to take an eternity. It seems that the more readily accessible conveniences that are available to us, the harder it is for us to wait, especially patiently.

I must admit I do appreciate the many conveniences that save time that we have today compared to when I was growing up. One of the many changes that have happened even more recently is the quick accessibility of information with the use of smartphones. I texted some people this past week to see if they might be available to fill in some dates when we will be needing an accompanist in our parish. Within seconds of sending the text, I received my first response. What really struck me was that the response came from New Zealand followed by a picture of this couple enjoying 70-degree weather. We have had the convenience of smartphones long enough now that most youth today do not know what it was like without having this wonderful convenience.

There was a teenager just finishing getting her haircut before me this week. Her mother had sent a signed check blank along with her to pay for her haircut. This girl asked for help on how to fill out the check. She really didn't understand how the check worked and how there was a time of waiting by physically taking the check to the bank before the money would later be removed from an account. She, like most of us, is now used to the immediate transfer of payments by card payment or simply by services like Venmo right from our phones. I like getting a reminder from Verizon on my phone saying my bill is ready and with a couple of clicks on my phone, my bill is paid, and service is never interrupted by a late payment. We want what we want to be given to us without having to wait for it.

The first lesson from Genesis for today begins with the words, “after these things”. Abraham and Sarah had been waiting for the birth of a son after receiving a promise from the Lord that this would take place. Abraham was 75 years old when he first heard this promise. Waiting patiently is not something that just our generation don't like to do. Even though Abraham didn't have a remote for his tv or a debit card or a cell phone, he, like us, did not like to wait patiently to receive what had been promised to him.

When you must wait and it seems like nothing is happening, soon you begin to doubt if what had been promised to you will ever happen. When you feel you just can't wait any longer, the next step is often to take matters into your own hands to put an end to the waiting. Abraham and Sarah took this matter of waiting for a son to be born to them into their own hands. But what they did was not what the Lord had promised to them. So, Lord spoke through an angel and delivered the same promise that he had given before and they believed again. After hearing this promise over and over for 25 years, at the age of 100 Abraham had the son that was promised to him. Abraham now believed in whatever the Lord told him to do, even if it meant offering his son as a burnt sacrifice despite it sounding like the Lord was about to remove the promise that he had made. In this story, Isaac asks a question that has a greater meaning than he intended when he asked Abraham, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb?” The lamb was provided that day for the sacrifice, but the real lamb who would take away the sins of the world was yet to arrive. More years of waiting were about to come.

A necessity for most of our conveniences is electricity. Once again, we don't like waiting patiently for the power to come on again. We know immediately when the lights go out, the tv screen goes black, or a hair dryer stops before all the hair is dry. Fortunately, we can make a quick call, but we must wait for someone else to resolve the problem. This year I plan on getting a generator set up so that I don't have to wait for my morning necessities like coffee and the morning news. I found a generator that I decided would work well, but I was informed that I would have to wait a couple weeks to receive it. I was promised that I would receive my generator this past Tuesday and I was given an approximate time that it would arrive. I believed in what had been promised to me because Amazon has a pretty good track record for us to deliver what has been

promised to us on time. Tuesday came and went. So did Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. I was ready to take matters into my own hands as I began to question what was promised to me, but after we connected with Amazon again and were given the promise that would arrive this Monday, I believed them again. Hearing the promise once again gave me the confidence to trust in the promise once again. If I was told that I would have to wait for 25 years to receive my generator, like Abraham waited for his promise to come true, I would not have waited patiently.

In the third chapter of Genesis a promise was given that a savior would deliver us from the power of Satan. This promise continued through Abraham and his son Isaac, but just as Isaac asked, so did the people who were waiting for the Savior, "Where is the lamb?" This waiting continued throughout the rest of the pages of the Old Testament. God's chosen people rarely waited patiently. We are told in the story when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to receive a Word from the Lord, that there was a delay in his return and before he came down the mountain, the people had fashioned a god of their own out of gold. They soon learned that this idol had no power to protect or to provide for them. They too had to hear a word from the Lord to restore their faith in the promise of the arrival of a savior.

In today's gospel reading, the waiting for the savior of the world comes to an end. John the Baptist was given one purpose and that was to announce the coming of the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. John had his own disciples up to that point and had been baptizing many people and calling them to repentance. John could do these things, but John was not the one who could take away sin.

The answer to Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb?" is answered when Jesus was walking toward John and John announces, "Here is the lamb". This is the lamb that we have been waiting for. John was given a promise to know that the one walking toward him would do what was promised that he would do. John was promised that the one that he saw the spirit descending like a dove and remaining is the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and receive the complete forgiveness of sins. John's disciples believed what he had said and the very next day they left John and followed Jesus.

There are still things we must wait for in this life. Even some things like Amazon deliveries that have a pretty good track record will eventually fail. But our time of waiting for a Savior has come to an end. Jesus, the lamb of God has arrived, and he has taken away the sin of the world, including your sin. Our faithfulness to God does not have a great track record. We are not good at patiently waiting for what we want in this life. But God's faithfulness to us is perfect. God never goes back on his word. God's Holy Spirit descended on each of you when you were baptized, and the Holy Spirit has remained there, and your unfaithfulness or impatience will not change God's favor toward you. God has provided the lamb of God for you. Amen