

Title: *'Grace to Wait'*
Date: *26th April 2015*
Scriptures: *Psalm 40:1-3 & Acts 1:1-9*

Praise: 'The Lord is good, and the Lord is holy: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord is great, and the Lord is sovereign: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord is Saviour, and the Lord is loving: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord has died, and the Lord has risen: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord is here, and the Lord is with us: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord Who came is the Lord Who is coming: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord has called us, and the Lord will send us: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name**

 The Lord is good, and the Lord is holy: let us praise His name. **Let us praise His name.'**

Prayer for the Message: Almighty God, may Your Word of old speak afresh this evening, bringing new vision, new faith and new commitment. Speak now, help us to listen. We pray with thanksgiving for Your Word in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Introduction: **I** have discovered that ministry in a LEP is like a loaf of '*Best of Both*' bread, you receive good things from both denominations.

In the weeks leading up to Easter we received booklets entitled simply, 'A gift of Easter' from the Methodist church, AND from the Church of England we received 'Rhythms of Grace with St Chad - A Retreat in Daily Life for Holy Week and Easter.'

And, having taken a sneak peek at its contents, I couldn't wait for **Holy Week** to begin so I could **retreat** with '**Rhythms of Grace...**'

Interesting that I should say, '*I couldn't wait for Holy Week to begin*' since the title of this message is '**Grace to Wait.**'

But how many of us are good at **waiting**? Waiting to be served at the *check-out*, waiting in traffic - nothing is moving, coming from South Africa we really appreciate the NHS *but* you do have to wait, wait for a letter, wait for an appointment, waiting for friends, waiting for a phone call, waiting for the meal to be ready. We seem to spend our lives '**waiting!**'

Even though our world is more about '*instant*' and '*faster*' - about *heat on full power for 2mins and allow to stand for 1minute*. OR ELSE, *just add 250mls of boiling water.*

I am not good at waiting, I like things to be done *yesterday*, **BUT** of late, beginning on what '**A Retreat in Daily Life for Holy Week and Easter**' called '*Holy Saturday*' the Lord began to minister to me about '**waiting**' and it seemed that everything I picked up to read was about '**waiting**'

Setting the scene: The first 3 verses of Psalm 40 say this, '**I waited, I waited for Yahweh, then He stooped to me and heard my cry for help. He pulled me up from the seething chasm, from the mud of the mire. He set my feet on rock, and made my footsteps firm. He put a fresh song in my mouth, praise of our God.**'

In Jeremiah 38 we read of the prophet literally being placed in a pit of mud and mire. **But in Psalm 40** King David is using these words '**mud**' and '**mire**' to describe a period in his life when he felt so trapped by his circumstances that he could see no way to free himself.

Have any of you felt *trapped by circumstances*? I have **AND like King David** I could see no way out **AND** it didn't matter what scenario I come up with, there appeared no way out!

But, also like King David *I resigned myself to waiting, waiting for Yahweh* - and **waiting** for the Lord's help is not easy, sometimes you feel you can't take the situation for a minute longer. **BUT THEN**, the Holy Spirit brings **1Corinthians 10:13** to mind, which says, *that the Lord will not allow us to be tried beyond our*

ability and strength and power to endure... (1Corinthians 10:13 in The Amplified Bible is awesome so have a read of it, if you can.)

And even though in an earlier Psalm, **Psalm 13** we hear David asking the Lord, '*How long...*' 4 times in the space of 2 verses, King David **waited** on the Lord, and even asked the Lord would he need to **wait** '*forever.*'

On *Holy Saturday*, the Saturday between the crucifixion and the resurrection the Scripture reading in the **retreat booklet** was **Matthew 27:57-66** and the title of the reflection was '**Grace to wait.**'

AND THIS IS WHAT IT SAID... (READ)

Holy Saturday is all about **waiting!**

After all that had taken place beginning with Palm Sunday and crowds shouting '*Hosanna*' **TO** Jesus turning over tables in the temple **TO** Jesus arrest, phoney trial, His interview with Pilate and the crowds shouting '*Crucify Him, free Barabbas*' **TO** 40 lashes minus one **TO** the journey through the streets of the city, out the city gate to Golgotha carrying His cross amidst jeering and ridicule **TO** the sound of nails being hammered into wood and more ridicule **TO** the sky darkening and the tremors of an earthquake, *Holy Saturday*, was so quiet one could almost hear the earth breathe!

Nothing could be done on *Holy Saturday* because it was the Sabbath - all that could be done was to **wait** - to rest as the law required.

Has anyone visited Israel? Well, I have and on the Sabbath still nothing moves. At breakfast in the Hotels you can't have a hot drink **OR** toast **OR** a *full English* because use of electricity is kept to a bare minimum. The Hotels even have a Sabbath elevator that moves so slowly, climbing the stairs is quicker.

It is not easy to sit and do nothing but **wait**, *ESPECIALLY* when what we're used to hearing is, '*don't just sit there, DO something!*'

But even on the spiritual battle field we are told in **Ephesians 6:13** *having done all the crisis demands to stand firmly in our place* - we are to *hold our ground having* put on our spiritual armour.

And so the women, Mary of Magdala, and the other Mary **waited!**

Our Scripture reading from **Acts 1** was also about **waiting**.

Tuesday morning prayer meeting at St Martin's follows a liturgy, and there are 2 files of liturgies in the *Ladies Chapel*; the liturgy taken out to be used the Tuesday following Holy Saturday was the one with **Acts 1:1-9**, as the Scripture reading, and in **verse 4**, Jesus commands the apostles not to leave Jerusalem *but to wait, wait for what the Father had promised.*'

And so the apostles just sat there - **waiting** - huddled together in the upper room - terrified of their enemies, hoping in Jesus' promise, longing to believe it would be true. For 10 days they waited - *and when the day of Pentecost had fully come* what the Father had promised came, sounding like a violent wind and appearing to them as tongues of fire.

The apostles, the women and King David ALL **waited!**

And their **waiting** was rewarded, the Lord did not disappoint!

The apostles knew what they had to do - proclaim the good news - tell the world what Christ had done, BUT they had no idea what to say OR how to say it, none of them had the first idea of where to start *and so they waited* - and the Father sent what He had promised - their mouths were opened and they spoke boldly, moving among the gathered crowd, no more fear, doubt or hesitation just ordinary men turning the world upside-down.

The women, having observed where Joseph laid the body of Jesus AND made ready spices and ointments, *we could say, having done all the crisis demanded, waited*. And they were rewarded by being the first to witness and testify to the resurrection of their Lord and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

And King David in his own difficult and seemingly hopeless circumstances *waited, waited for Yahweh* and God heard him and helped him. King David didn't try and sort things out himself, *as I have tried to do*, King David **waited** and God did 5 things for David.

- God turned to David and noticed his seemingly hopeless circumstances
- God heard King David's cry - **verse 1, and the Lord inclined to me and heard my cry**
- God lifted David out of the pit, the mud and the mire
- God set the king's feet on a rock, giving him a firm place to stand - **verse 2, the Lord drew me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and**

set my feet upon a rock steadying my steps and establishing my goings

- And finally, God placed a new song of praise in David's mouth - **verse 3**,
And He has put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God

And as I continue to **wait** on the Lord, I am trusting that He will incline Himself to me and hear my cry - that He will draw me up and set my feet upon a rock, and He will put a new song in my mouth.

Are you in a difficult situation?

Are you perhaps waiting for God to do something? Let us all take comfort in the knowledge that while we wait on our Lord He is working out His purposes in our lives, *I remember reading once that God is more interested in our characters than in our comfort* - so while God works out His purposes He is mindful of our frailty, He knows how exhausted we get because life can be hard sometimes and so He comes with His antidote while we **wait**...

God's antidote is found in **Isaiah 40:31**

Isaiah 40:31, '*But those who WAIT for the Lord, shall change and renew their strength and power, they shall lift their wings and mount up close to God as eagles mount up to the sun; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired.*'

And that might sound a little backward, *mount up on wings*, then we *run*, and then we *walk* - aren't we supposed to walk before we run?

But the idea is that when we *mount up close to God* we get God's perspective - we remember who we are in Christ AND Whose we are because of Christ.

To run the Christian race

To walk the Christian walk takes an abundance of grace and power and love and patience and compassion, fortunately our God abounds in all of those, but we can only demonstrate them when we have **waited** and in that waiting *mounted up close to God as eagles mount up to the sun*.

Are you waiting for God to do something in seemingly hopeless circumstances, then with me let's leave the burden with the Lord, trust Him to act, **AND** while we **wait** for Him to do so - let's mount up close to our faithful God, Who will not

fail us, let us down, leave us without support OR leave us helpless, but let us confidently and boldly say, *'The Lord is my Helper.'*

Reflection:

- Can you this evening identify with King David trapped by circumstances - or the women where all has gone as badly wrong as it possible can do - OR maybe the apostles, you know what God is calling you to do, but where do you begin?
- How do you feel right now knowing there is nothing you can do, except wait?
- Is your faith helping you OR are you crying out, *'Lord, help me in my unbelief? Help me Lord to see things from Your perspective.'* *'Lord, enough!'*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, our Lord and our God, in our helplessness give to us the grace to **wait** patiently - when there is nothing more that can be done, when we have done all ***the crisis demands*** help us to be still, and to wait with You - to know who we are in Christ AND Whose we are because of Christ - renew our strength that we might rise up on wings as eagles and soar in closeness to You.

We thank You Father, that when You have worked out Your purpose in our lives, You will incline Yourself to us and hear our cries. You will draw us up out of the horrible pit of miry clay and You will set our feet upon a rock. And the new song You put in our mouths will be a song of praise to our God. Oh Lord, give us abundant grace to wait. Jesus, in Your name we pray with thanksgiving 'Amen.'

Blessing:

The Lord says, *'Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.'* We go in the peace of Christ, the love of God and the joy of the Spirit. We go in His name and for His glory. We go, and we go in Him and with Him. Amen.