

## Wait

*February 8, 2009*

(Epiphany 5 - Year B)

Isaiah 40: 21-31

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Today, in our scripture reading from the Old Testament, we read from the Prophet Isaiah.

In this reading, Isaiah is writing to the Hebrew people who have been exiled and taken away from their homeland.

The Hebrew people are in exile in Babylon.

They are sad and tired and homesick.

And to these tired and homesick people, the Prophet Isaiah writes:

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,

They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.”

When I hear this scripture passage, my mind immediately goes right to the scripture verse that is inscribed on the wall here at St. Alban's, on either side of the altar.

If you read what is carved on the wall back here, it says:

They that wait upon the Lord.

Shall renew their strength.

If you notice, we have many beautiful windows and wooden carvings in this worship space.

Yet, if you look around - in this entire church, there is only 1 scripture verse that is written on the walls.

And the one scripture verse that is carved in wood in this church is Isaiah 40:31.

They that wait upon the Lord

Shall renew their strength.

I have thought and prayed about this scripture verse all week long, this verse that is forever inscribed upon the walls of St. Alban's

## Episcopal Church.

And I have asked myself:

Why was this scripture verse so important to the founders of this church?

Why was this statement of faith so important, that it would be chosen as the only verse from Holy Scripture to be carved on our walls?

Why do we need to wait upon the Lord to renew our strength?

Why is it so important to wait?

Two weeks ago, our son, Scott, got sick and had fever for several days. So, on a Monday morning, I stayed home from work and got him in for a doctor's appointment.

The doctor ended up giving Scott a prescription for an anti-biotic.

After we went to the doctor's office, I dropped Scott off at home.

Then, because of a glitch in the communication between the doctor's office and the pharmacy, I had to go up to CVS to get the prescription filled, in person.

Entering CVS, I walked up to the prescription counter and told the lady my situation.

After some research, she was able to fill the prescription.

But then, she asked me a very important question.

She asked:

Do you want to wait?

My mind immediately raced through all the things that I needed to do at the church office, especially after spending a busy Monday morning at a doctor's office.

I glanced at my watch, then I asked her:

"If I wait here, about how long will it take to fill the prescription?"

The lady at CVS replied:

"Oh, about 15 minutes or so.

Or, you don't *have* to wait.

You could come back later and pick up the prescription."

I glanced at my watch again.

15 minutes - that sounded like an awful lot of time to wait and to do nothing.

However, in resignation, I sighed:

“All right, then.  
I’ll wait.”

As soon as those words left my mouth, she stamped my prescription form with one word, in big, bold, red letters.

She stamped my prescription with this one word:

W-A-I-T. WAIT.

Then she gave the stamped form to the pharmacist.

Now that I was officially classified as one who waits, I began to roam around CVS.

I roamed down the magazine aisle.

I picked up a Texas Monthly magazine, which I used to like to read, and I skimmed through a few of the interesting articles in there.

Then, I suddenly realized that I was just about out of deodorant at home. So, I went down that aisle and picked up a few extras.

I then stumbled across the self-monitored blood pressure machine, and poked my hand into the arm cuff to get a reading.

My blood pressure was in the normal range - but on the high side of normal.

I rationalized that it was on the high side because I had been forced to wait.

I roamed through the greeting cards, wondering whose birthday was coming up soon that I should remember.

Before I knew it, I had put a few things into my shopping cart and was finding the whole experience of wandering through CVS to be kinda relaxing.

Then, over the loud speaker, the voice of the CVS lady rang out:

“Mr. Fisher who is waiting - your prescription is ready.”

I could not believe that 15 minutes had passed so quickly.

I was almost sad to see the waiting come to an end.

I had entered the CVS store stressed-out and in a hurry.  
Yet, I had discovered that, in my waiting, my strength had been renewed.

Yesterday, we had a very busy day at St. Alban's.  
Yesterday morning, we buried a long-time member of this church, Elsie Angelo.

Then, in the afternoon, we opened the church doors again for the wedding of Rebekah Stille and Ross Hughes, who are both active members of this church.

At both of these occasions, at the funeral and at the wedding, I looked intently at the scripture verse that is carved on our wall here.

And I thought about the thousands and thousands of people who, over the last 50-plus years, have looked at that scripture verse.

At countless weddings and Christmases and funerals and Easters and baptisms and regular old Sundays, we are reminded to wait upon the Lord to renew our strength.

For years and years and years, people walk into this church - stressed out, in a hurry, tired, homesick, exiled and broken.

And for years and years and years, thousands of people have found St. Alban's to be a safe place to wait - and to waste time with God.

And after we spend an hour in this church waiting together, reading scripture and baptizing and feasting and praying and marrying and burying,

Then we hear that our time of wasteful waiting is over:

“God in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

And we go back out into the world, with our strength renewed,

All because we have come here - to wait upon the Lord.

When I waited at CVS, I thought that it was going to be a huge waste of time.

And when we gather as a Christian community, some folks might think that this hour that we spend together is a huge waste of time.

Yet, the founders of St. Alban's knew better.

Those who decided to inscribe Isaiah 40, verse 31, on this wall, knew that the reason why St. Alban's was built - was so that we would have a place to wait - and to renew our strength.

So, slow down.

Don't try to run any faster than God.

And, let your life be stamped with a big, red, four letter word:

Wait.

AMEN.

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