

# Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

[Genesis 25: 19-34, Ps 119: 105-112, Romans 8:1-11 and Matthew 13: 1-9 & 18-23](#) Vanderbilt Lectionary

[Proper 10A/Ordinary 15A/Pentecost +6 July 16, 2017](#) Textweek

I'm going to tell you a little something about myself. It's not really a secret, because I'm happy to share this with others, but it's also not something that I'm particularly proud of. Being a Christian leader I should be a better person, but the thing I'm going to share with you is that I hate waiting. I hate waiting. You might say that hate is a strong word, and yes, you are right, but I hate waiting. Once I've decided on something or a particular course of action, I work towards reaching that goal. And working towards reaching a goal is a good thing, of course. But my stance of "non-waiting" doesn't take into account God's timing.

As I said, once I've decided upon a course of action, I work to make it happen. The difficulty is that my timing isn't always in line with God's timing. And then that just gets me more and more frustrated and angry and impatient. And this isn't good for someone who calls herself a Christian, and it **certainly** isn't good for someone who is a Christian leader. But, its part of what makes me, me, and it's a very common feature in our modern culture where there is instant access to just about everything.

Look at email, instant coffee, social media, express delivery and our increasing 24hr society, just to name a few.

And you know what? I'm currently waiting for something. I've made a decision, and I'm trying to put this into action, but it's clearly not the right time, because if it was, I'd have this thing by now. But I don't. I'm still waiting for it.

But I'm in good company. There are lots of people in the Bible who had to wait for what they wanted. And some of these people had express promises from God about what they were waiting for, but

still they had to wait for it. In our OT story today Isaac married Rebecca when he was 40 years old, but they didn't have their child until he was 60. And remember that this 20 year wait was AFTER the wait Isaac had between marrying Leah and then Rebecca. But not only was it Isaac and Rebecca who waited 20 years, but also his parents Sarah and Abraham had to wait 25 years for Isaac himself to arrive; Joseph had to wait 20 years to be reconciled to his brothers. In the New Testament Elizabeth and Zechariah had to wait many years before the birth of their son John. The Bible is full of stories of people who've had to wait for things – not just things that they want, but things that they've been specially promised by God himself.

The easy answer for Rachel, Sarah, Rebecca and Elizabeth and their husbands, which no doubt was not evident at the time, but only obvious once they had their babies, was that God made them infertile so that when their babies came along it was very clearly a miracle, and very clear who was ultimately responsible, and just how special those babies were.

But we don't have easy answers in our lives to each of our questions. Many of you might remember that I am a school chaplain. One of the questions I get from students is along the lines of "why doesn't God answer my prayer" or "why does God say no". Most of us who remember our theology remember that God does answer each and every one of our prayers, but they tend to have one of 3 answers: yes, not yet, or I have something better in mind.

Isaac and Rebecca were given the "not yet" answer. I'm currently being given the "not yet" answer. Sometimes this makes the waiting easier, sometimes it doesn't. I am a product of my culture, and my culture, as we've discussed, is a fairly instant one. But one thought has come to mind, and that is that we are much more teachable and reachable when we are waiting. If we got everything we wanted the moment we realised we wanted it – imagine what life on earth would be like? Humanity would have killed each other

decades if not centuries ago! If each of us got exactly what we wanted imagine how selfish and self-centred we'd be? When I asked myself that question, it made me quite pleased that I've had to wait for things. Waiting has made me much more compassionate. Waiting has made me realise that sometimes I didn't actually want what it was I was asking for. And waiting sometimes has even made me see how what I wanted was such a bad thing for me to have. Yes, waiting has made me a much nicer person, and I would guess it has been the same for you, too.

So where does this leave us today? Well, our Gospel reading reminds us that we might never see what we are waiting for – nice cheerful thought that that is, because a seed must die to itself before it accomplishes what it has been spending it's whole life waiting for – the chance to be fruitful. This thought in turn leads me to our reading from Romans, and the lesson there of living in the power of the Holy Spirit. On the surface, this might sound like rather cold comfort – along the lines of “don't worry if you can't see any result from what you've been waiting for, you've been doing God's work in the meantime, so it doesn't matter if you never get a result”. We are human beings, and as such we like to see results from our efforts.

But remember, that God is in the details. It is in how we live our everyday lives while we are waiting for those big things to come along, that we've been working towards, that we've been planning and saving and researching and so impatient for, that counts. God is with us in the waiting. God wants us to spend time with him. And if we pray in our frustration as Isaac and Rebecca did, then we are in good hands. We are living in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are waiting on God's timing and all will be as God accomplishes his will. AMEN.

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