

Be Patient (12-11-16)

by Rev. Sheryl Stewart

Jeremiah 23: 1-62 Colossians 1: 11-23 Luke 23: 33-43

Responsive Reading: Psalm 146: 5-10

The news seems to be increasingly full of stories of violence, bigotry, fear, intolerance, and injustice. Jesus warned us this would happen and I particularly remember his reply to the lament of the women in the crowd as He staggered through the streets trying to carry His Cross to Calvary: “Do not mourn for me, daughters of Israel, but for yourselves. If they do this while the wood is green, what will they do when it is dry?”

If the world was like a tree, fresh and green, in Jesus’ day, that wood is certainly seasoned and dry now! We are the people who have lived in darkness, who have seen a great light of hope, but in many ways that increases our frustration at the persistence of the shadows.

So, I can understand the question which John the Baptist and his disciples put to Jesus. John was in prison for speaking the truth and seeking reform, but the sin and villainy he hated persisted. So, he asked Jesus, “Are you the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” I

can understand that and I can understand those who look at evil and doubt God altogether. Is God really God, or should we look to science, blind chance, or magic?

So, I began to look through the prophets, thinking that I would find a call to action and assurances that our God, mighty in battle, will surely win this terrible war of good against evil, of exploitation and self-interest against nurturing and hope.

Those calls and messages are, in fact, a strong theme in prophecy; yet, the more my soul magnified God's word, the more I saw God's incredible patience. Over and over, we hear that the saints and prophets saw the victory of God coming but died without tasting it in this world because God was waiting "for the right time."

At the right time, Jesus was born; at the right time, Jesus died. At the right time, He will come again and God's will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. John and his disciples, I, and vast, hurting masses want that right time to be *now*. The world has been redeemed, but I long, fervently long, for it to be transformed. Yet, if these are the end times,

the other prophecies about people falling away from faith seem to be in force. Some turn to other faiths, while others leave faith altogether because they blame God for appearing not to intervene when their loved ones suffer or die. Do I have to wait, I wonder, for every knee to bow and every tongue confess God's love and saving action?

In our church, we believe that everyone will be redeemed and made holy; so, that little song from the youth sermon applies and the suggested answer is, "Yes. Be patient, be patient don't be in such a hurry; when you get impatient, you only start to worry. Remember, remember that God is patient, too and think of all the times when others have to wait for you."

In the meantime, let's follow Mary's example. If hope is hard to see, let our souls magnify the Lord. Wait on the Lord, do justice, love kindness, and walk in humble hope with our God, who is here already and will fulfill all the divine promises at the right time. Hallelujah and Amen!