

Column

A woman sitting in the departure lounge of an airport turns to the man who had just taken the seat beside her and says excitedly: “Did you hear our flight has been delayed an hour? Isn’t that terrible? They are having to de-ice the plane.”

He nods and says something to the effect: “Better safe than sorry.” But that didn’t stop her from fidgeting and repositioning the contents of her carry-on bag.

For a few minutes the two stare out the plate glass window where snow is coming down. Then she starts again, “We are going to be an hour late.” He asks if she had a connecting flight. She shakes her head no and again begins to rearrange the contents of her carryon.

Glancing over in her direction, he notices her refolding a pair of scrubs. “You work in the medical profession?” he asks.

“As a matter of fact, I do. I’m a RN at a hospital,” she answers.

He continues. “On a long shift, have you ever wished you could just sit down, put your feet up, think about something nice and rest for half an hour or so?”

“Yes,” she says. “Who hasn’t?”

“Well, here’s your opportunity,” he responds. “You can’t change the situation, but you can change your way of looking at it. Why not take a negative and turn it into a positive? An hour wait is not that bad.”

“I hadn’t thought of it like that,” she answers.

He took out a book and began reading. After a while, he glances over and notices that she is no longer fidgeting but napping peacefully.

This story is in the genre of a ‘preacher story’ and is certainly not original with me; nevertheless, there is something each of us can learn from it.

Waiting, while at times painful, is not always a negative.

Such was the case with Jesus' disciples following their Lord's physical departure 40 days after Easter at the Ascension. The Master told them that they had an important role to play in His Kingdom project: they were to be His witnesses. They were to bring glad tidings of salvation to the whole world. Nevertheless, they were not to set out just yet. Rather they were to go back to Jerusalem and wait until they received power from on high.

They would only understand the meaning of Jesus' words 10 days later on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell upon them in a new way. On that day, they would take to the streets proclaiming the crucified and risen Jesus as the promised Messiah and the world's true Lord. In Acts 2:41, we are told around 3000 people came to Christian faith that day and were baptized. The results testify to the fact that the wait was beneficial, not a negative.

But what if they had not obeyed? What if they had grown impatient and set off on the mission Jesus had given them under their own steam? Almost certainly the result would have been disappointing if not disastrous.

There is a lesson here for Jesus' followers of every age. Learning to wait on the Lord and not charging ahead with life in our own power and wisdom is part of spiritual maturity. Indeed it is the path to success, as the Old Testament prophet reminds those of every generation: "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; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Both waiting and doing are part of the calling of a disciple. May we strive to do both well.

O GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of

Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen. (Collect for Pentecost, Book of Common Prayer)

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