

Westgate Baptist Community
Sunday 5 March 2006.

Actively Waiting – the journey of Lent

A Sermon by Geoff Wraight

Do you like waiting?

I love that TV ad on at the moment about one of the banks. This bloke is waiting in this long line in the opposition's bank to be served by a teller. The bank employees are all chatting on the phone and fiddling around while the one who is serving is slowly counting an old lady's very big bag of coins. A look of unbelief spreads on his face as he spots a man and women up ahead who look at him, and say, "We met here you know..", then "that was before the kids came along".

It then flashes to a new scene where he is sitting in a comfortable seat and simply steps up when he is ready to be immediately served by the smart looking young female teller...

I think it is a vision of bank utopia. And like most ads – I know it is a lie. Unfortunately, in my experience it is far from the truth and you will wait as long in the Westpac Bank as you do in the Commonwealth whenever there is a lot of people wanting to be served.

I remember one day some years ago when I was in a great rush going from one place to another appointment. It was around 1pm and I was feeling hungry but had hardly any time to sit down to a quiet lunch. I spotted a McDonalds in the shopping centre I was walking through from the last appointment and thought – I need food – it will be quick- why not. I walked up to the counter and waited in a very short line for a minute or two. "I'll have one of those thanks", the blearily 15 year old boy took my money and collected the drink and chips but no burger. He handed me the tray and said, "Sorry sir there will be a two minute wait on the burger." I suddenly found myself thinking, "What! Two minutes – you have got to be kidding!"

The frenetic pace of city life starts to infect us with virus of impatience. And as the virus incubates and feeds on the nutrients of the instant, must have it now, culture of consumerism, we find ourselves caught up in this madness of constant movement.

I worry sometimes that we parents find ourselves pre-disposing our children to be workaholics who never slow down by encouraging or allowing them to be involved in so many after school or extra- curricula activities that they never have time to just be children.

We must get ahead, we must take every opportunity to progress, to open doors of opportunity, to get the best possible educational stimulus, to move, to grow, to improve to succeed, succeed .succeed.

Only problem is, this culture of constant progress and movement can leave no room for the nourishment of the soul. No space for the heart and no chance to simply be – and be loved, and be with those we love – without any agenda or schedule.

The season of Lent invites us to take stock, to make time for God – to wait creatively. Or to put it in the Biblical phrase – to wait on the Lord.

I say this a lot but I really think that Micah 6:8 is a blueprint for a balanced and whole life. “Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God”

They are the three spokes of the wheel, or the three legs of the stool. You need all for it to be strong.

And it is the “walk humbly with your God” spoke that I think Lent is all about.

The two key words for me in this phrase are the word “Walk” and the pronoun “Your”. To walk means to step slowly and deliberately, and the word “your” – your God implies a relationship.

Nothing and no one can ever be loved at speed.

Friendship and love are two things that the more we deliberately try seek after them the more they allude us. The more we try the further we slip from the goal – like our runners trying to get a slice of heaven.

Lent is gift of grace. And like the rainbow of God’s mercy and grace it always returns and always reminds us of the Creator’s love and patience. We just have to stop, look up and notice it.

My challenge to you is to take Lent seriously this year – make a space each week over the next six to reflect, to walk, to wait for the Lord... It won’t be easy, you’ll have to be patient and move slowly - a very counter-cultural idea.

I’d like to finish with a favourite Leunig prayer, let’s pray...

Dear God, we pray for another way of being: another way of knowing.

Across the difficult terrain of our existence we have attempted to build a highway and in so doing have lost our footpath. God lead us to our footpath: Lead us there where in simplicity we may move at the speed of natural creatures

and feel the earth's love beneath our feet. Lead us there where step-by-step we may feel the movement of creation in our hearts. And lead us there where side-by-side we may feel the embrace of the common soul. Nothing can be loved at speed.

God lead us to the slow path; to the joyous insights of the pilgrim; another way of knowing; another way of being.

AMEN