

I Hate Being Left
 Acts 1:6-14
 Easter 7/Ascension
 St. Clement's, Inkster
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May the God who creates us, redeems us, and sustains us, be with us this day, and remain with us always. Amen.

Good Morning!

I hate being left. I hate when someone leaves me. I always have. When someone I love leaves, even if I know I will see them again soon, I feel an emptiness, a sadness, a longing. I don't even like to leave. One of the things my spouse Susan and I have figured out after 38 years together is that packing to leave, particularly if one of us is going somewhere and the other is staying is always hard for us. For years, we would have squabbles during these periods, until we finally figured out that leaving, transitions are hard for both of us.

I think for me it's because I moved a lot as a child. My dad was an officer in the Marine Corps and the early parts of my life were fairly transient. I was in three different second grades. I also remember, in fourth grade, going on vacation, and while we were away, my best friend, Kelly Jarwin, moved because her father was in the army and they were transferred. Long before cell phones and texting and I never had a way of following up.

So. I hate being left.

The notion of being one of the disciples, having watched Jesus die an excruciating death on the cross, then hear rumors that his body was not in the tomb and then to be in the upper room, with the locked doors and to have him appear not once but twice. Whoa. Then be out on the lake in a boat, fishing all night and to have him call from the shore and tell them where to throw the net, so that they might catch some fish. Then to grill a few of the fish they caught and all together have a barbecue on the beach. Wow. Amazing. Think about how that must have felt? He was dead. He was gone. Now he's alive. He is here. He still loves us. We are one. Think about it.

Then with the promise of an advocate, "Stay in Jerusalem and wait for what the Father has promised," (Acts 1:4). You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come to you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth," (Acts 1:8).

This Jesus says to them and then as they watch he ascends into heaven. And all I can say is that I would have fallen over in complete and utter despair. Why are you leaving? I would have been so consumed with grief, I would not have had the time of day for the two men in white robes, asking why we were all looking up to heaven.

I would just know that the one I loved so very much, had left me.

Now what?

So, what to do? What to do now and what to do then?

The apostles went back to the Upper room. They went back to a place of some safety and comfort. But more than that, they returned to the community of connection and care. They did not scatter, wander away, lost in their own sadness. Instead, they went together to the place where their other friends were. They went to the upper room, told the story, no doubt shed tears, and started praying. “They were united in their devotion to prayer, [all of them], along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers,” (Acts 1:14).

It’s a simple message friends. Sometimes I want answers to be harder and more complex, so I feel like I’m engaged in a big project with countless steps and many permutations. But it’s not. The directions are simple and straightforward: Go back and wait.

They went back and waited and prayed. They engaged in scriptural devotions and prayer. So on this Spring Day, where Spring may actually have finally arrived in Michigan, in this time in our fraught frail world, may we for just awhile, return to our roots, and not engage in the grand and extravagant, but instead in prayer to God, with each other.

So let us have the courage, the grit and the discipline to pray. Come Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts with hope. Strengthen our faith, encourage us to remember the Gifts you have given us, so that we might, embody your hopes to the ends of the earth.

Amen.