

Standing Firm in the Lord

Sermon notes for the sermon
Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young
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I am sure that most if not all of us have had the experience of arriving at a restaurant for dinner only having to wait 20 or 30 minutes for a table to be free. We place our name on a list with the host, are then handed a pager and then try to find a seat in the waiting area. We sit or stand occasionally checking the pager to see if it went off without our knowing it; we check with the host to see if she or he forgot to write our name on the waiting list. Sometimes we check with those who are dining with us to see if there is a possibility of going to a different, less crowded restaurant – “is it worth the wait,” We ask ourselves?

If you haven't had that experience maybe you have had to wait much longer than expected for your car to be repaired. You bring the family car in for what you thought was a simple tune-up and oil change and sit in the waiting area for hours. If you are fortunate the service station has Wi-Fi so that at least you check your email and catch up on some things. After a while you begin to wonder if you should find another service station; maybe this one is not all that it is cracked up to be. So you sit and wait, wishing you had asked a friend to pick you up at the station while the care was being repaired.

I remember as a teenage the longest year of my life was the year I turned 16 years old. Do you remember the year before you were eligible to

receive your driving privileges? I never thought that 17 would ever get there. I waited a whole year but to me it was like waiting a lifetime to take the tests that would allow me the privilege of driving the family car.

Or maybe you are just entering the teenage years and you do not yet have the family privilege of texting your friends on the cell phone. You wait anxiously for the day when you celebrate the birthday that will give you that privilege. You think that it will never get here. Then there is the reality that your friends are able to text and they do not let you forget that you can't do that yet 'cause "you're not old enough." How humiliating!

Today's scripture reading from Exodus is a story about anxiously waiting. The children of Israel have been set free from bondage, serving the Egyptians only to find themselves led by a God who brings them to the desert – no food, no water, no map or GPS. For God it is a journey of faith for the people who would be his nation. For Israel it was suffering like they had never experienced in Egyptian servitude. God has supplied the food and the water for the journey and God has provided leaders in Moses and Aaron.

In today's reading Israel is at the base of Mt. Sinai while Moses had climbed to the top of the mountain to receive instructions from God. Moses is on the mountain for 40 days and nights – he does not come down to report on how things are going; the people cannot see or hear him, in fact all they can hear is rumbling from the top of the mountain. 40 days, imagine it, with no word from the one who has

brought you to the middle of the desert! Wouldn't you get a bit anxious? Wouldn't you wonder if Moses was dead or just ran off because he couldn't stand it anymore? Wouldn't you begin to get edgy wondering if you and your family will be able to survive whatever it is that lies ahead?

It is no wonder that the children of Israel petitioned Aaron to make an idol; to create something tangible that the people could see and touch and believe in. It is no wonder that Aaron gave in to their demands – he also wondered what had happened to Moses. At least while Moses and he were leading the people they could support each other when the crowd got restless. Now he was all alone without the support of God's chosen servant, Moses. Aaron needed something to believe in as well and 40 days and nights was a long time to wait.

When you do not received the answer to prayer that you were hoping for; or, when the answer comes and it is not what you expected what do you do? Do you wait upon the Lord as Moses did or do you let your impatience, anxiety, and disappointment get the better of you? Do you stand firm in the Lord or do you look for another answer – money, infidelity, alcohol abuse, your work? Often times, when life becomes difficult and we find ourselves pleading with God for help and help does not come in the time we want it or in the way we were hoping for, we look for something else.

I find it interesting in this biblical account that God initially, upon seeing how the children of Israel had turned to the golden calf and away from God, wanted to take some alone time to think about how he

would destroy them and start over with Moses. Was this the burning hot wrath of God or was it a test of Moses and the type of leader he had grown to become? On this same mountain God had initially called Moses to free his people from Egyptian slavery. Moses was not too keen on the invitation and sought to get out of it to save his own skin. Would Moses, now that God had offered to destroy the people who had been nothing but trouble for Moses, jump at the idea of having them put to death – God starting over with Moses. Or, would Moses remember the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? The promise that was continuing to bring this stiff-necked people forward to the Promised Land?

When you become distracted by the present, losing sight of the glorious future that awaits all of us, do you settle for less? Or, do you give in to the temptation to set yourself over and above others thinking that you have it right and to hell with the rest of humanity? Today's reading calls us to stand firm in the Lord especially during the difficult times of life. We are called to a life of faith and obedience not a life of ease and luxury.