

Mark 1:29-39/Feb. 7, 2021

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, did you catch the reoccurring theme in today's readings? In all four of them, we have the same message. Wait on the Lord and proclaim who God is. Wait and proclaim. They actually go hand in hand, which may seem strange, but when you consider what the real message is, it's not strange at all.

Wait on the Lord, because God is in charge, not us, and that is what we are to proclaim. Wait on the Lord, have faith, trust God, and when we do that, we proclaim that God is in control.

Wait and proclaim. That's a perfect message to hear right now, because it is our reality in the midst of winter, at least when it comes to gardening.

Right now we can't force anything to grow outside – it's too cold and too dark. We have no choice but to wait, but it's not a hopeless wait. We know eventually it will be warm enough and light enough for plants to grow, starting with those bulbs we planted last Fall.

So, right now, we wait on the Lord and in waiting we proclaim God's unfaltering love for creation as we proclaim our trust in God who is faithful. That can be hard, because we have control issues and want things right now.

But, in the winter, we have no other choice. We have to wait on the Lord. It's a lesson we get taught every year and every year we know the truth that God is in control.

God alone makes the Earth rotate around the sun, and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it, so we get to just rest in the Lord and regain our strength.

That's what the Sabbath, a day of rest, is all about. When we rest, we remember and proclaim that God alone is God, and that God loves and cares for us.

It's kind of like going rafting down a raging river. You could fight the river and try to paddle upstream, but it won't do much good. But, if you just rest and wait, the river will take you where you need to go. Wait and proclaim.

In Isaiah, the prophet asks - Have you not known? Have you not heard? Have you not understood from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundation

of the earth? Don't you get it that God is in control? God created everything and cares for everything, so wait on the Lord and you will be strengthened.

The psalmist sings out "Hallelujah" proclaiming God's greatness and then reminds us that God doesn't take joy in the abilities of horse or man, but in those who trust God and await God's steadfast love.

Paul tells the Corinthians that the only reason he can proclaim the Gospel is because he rests in the Lord. It's not his work, but God's work. Paul is merely a vessel through which God proclaims God's steadfast love to all people.

And in the Gospel reading, God is on the loose in Jesus who is proclaiming God's faithfulness to a lost and oppressed people. A people who have been waiting on the Lord for hundreds of years.

Peter's mother-in-law is the epitome of Israel, waiting for the Lord to raise her up, which he does. Her response is to then serve him. God acts and then she responds.

The people had been crying out to God for help, and they knew God would help them, which God does. Healed, they then serve in God's mission for the world.

In Mark, you will notice that Jesus is always on the go and here in Mark 1:38 Jesus tells us what his mission is, why he is on the go. His mission is not to heal and cast out demons, although he does that as a symbol of God's presence, but his main goal is to proclaim God's love to all people, which he does in word and deed.

But, Jesus' main mission is proclamation, but in order to proclaim, Jesus first rests. Like God on the 7th day of creation, Jesus rests. He goes and prays. He rests and then he goes, unlike the disciples who are busy hunting him all night.

Jesus, however, will not let the disciples catch him up in their unrest, in their plan. Instead he will take them along with him to proclaim the good news – it's not our works, but God's work that brings healing to the land. God is in control, not us.

So, we wait and proclaim. Wait and proclaim. Wait on the Lord and proclaim God is in control. Wait and proclaim that God is God.

And then, be open to being the vessel, who does God's will here and now. Like Paul did. But, you cannot be that vessel unless you first wait on the Lord.

You can't just tell the Lord your will and expect it to be done. When we pray, we pray – your will be done – to God. When we wait on the Lord, we wait to hear God's will and only then will we be strengthened to act.

Wait and proclaim. Wait and proclaim. Be strengthened, and then act.

As you may realize, we are now 10 days away from Lent. Ash Wednesday is Feb. 17. This year for Lent, you may want to consider how you might wait and proclaim. How might waiting for Easter be a proclamation of who God is? Wait and proclaim. Proclaim by waiting.

Usually I do the same things for Lent. I give up coffee and my credit card. I do that so that I can give more money to World Hunger Relief. Those are my steadies. But, I always also pick up something else, and so this year I'm pondering how I might wait and proclaim.

Our egos always want us to do something, but by not doing, we are proclaiming God is in control, and it's good to have some sort of reminder of that. Sometimes by doing nothing we are really doing something.

And that is the whole idea behind contemplative prayer, and maybe that needs to be my practice this year – 20 minutes every day of silent prayer, of doing nothing.

Our actions, after all, got Jesus crucified, but we had absolutely nothing to do with Jesus' resurrection. God did that all on God's own without any help from us.

And so maybe I'll also contemplate this amaryllis that I brought out before Christmas and it still hasn't bloomed.

I've watered it and fertilized it and put it in the sun, and nothing. It got leaves, but it still hasn't flowered. It's actually quite humbling, because when I broke it out of its box in December it had a dried up flower on it from some time after it got put away. ???

What I definitely know, what this plant has taught me, is that I have no control over its blooming. Nada. This flower is not on my time, it's on God's time, and that's okay.

This plant is waiting and proclaiming, and it's waiting and proclaiming is reminding me that God is ultimately in control, and that is the good news that we have to share in the world. That is the Gospel, the Prophets, and the Law.

God is in control, so we wait in hope and proclaim in joy. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.