

July 20

If this is the first time you've had a chance to look at the summer reflections, please scroll down to the section marked: "suggestions for making it real" to find a way into being with the Word.

Background to the theme:

One word seems to call out from these readings: patience! But don't you just want to see the end result NOW?

Our elders knew the concept of delayed gratification, of saving up before getting what our heart desired, but generations after, weaned on the shiny surface of the credit card see life differently. And it's a challenge, all this waiting. Especially if it leads me through a place that isn't what I thought I was promised. A bit like the ancient Israelites rescued from their slavery in Egypt only to find themselves spending a generation in the desert.

Yet we can make the journey, we can take the first step. We can do so knowing that a loving God leads us, and that his Son, Jesus, is our guide on the way. And even if I look around and see injustice and blatant unfairness seemingly in the lead, I can remember: God will set it right.

We are his children. Blessed by him, for him to be his blessing to others.

The readings:

Isaiah 44:6-8

Ps 86:11-17

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Wow. Imagine a boxing ring with the champion walking around, the crowd shouting on both fighters. Sounds to me like Isaiah had this kind of image in mind when he shared the message God had given him. "Go on! Take me on, then!" and, of course, there's no opponent can do battle with this champion and hope to win.

When you were baptized, water was poured over your head. It symbolized your rebirth into Christ's death and resurrection, your dying and being born to new life. To live this new life, you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's breath that channels in you through the presence of Jesus. This Spirit makes you alive to be whom God wants

you to be: part of his new creation. And, created in his image as you are, a co-creator with him of a new future. Paul's words of reassurance are your invitation to come, join, and go God's way. Easy it ain't, but what an invitation!

In the Matthew reading, one way of interpreting Jesus' message would be to say: "God will take care of it all!" Just get on with what you have to do, help to build God's kingdom here on earth, and don't get side-tracked. God really will take care of it.

May you feel the grace of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Jesus this week .

Macitaja Ilze

Suggestions for making it real:

Within yourself:

Gently rest.

Let your breath be light.

Be aware of the sounds around you, but also the stillness, the feel of the air brushing over you.

Notice the light and shadows cast.

Choose one of the readings: one that seems to speak to you, and read it slowly to yourself.

Let the words drift into your awareness.

There may be a phrase that calls out for your attention.

Re-read it and then let it rest within you.

Listen to what God is saying to you through these words.

Maybe there's a question or a situation in your everyday life that comes to your attention.

Gently put that before God and ask for clarity.

Rest and continue to let your breath be light, but feel how you're being restored by the exchange of air within you.

These may be some questions you want to put to God arising out of the readings:

- what battles am I facing at the moment?

I call to mind a challenging time in the past. I reflect on my feelings at the time, my fears, anger, uncertainty. I look for God's hand pushing away my opponent. I sense it here with me, now, in this challenge.

• sometimes it's challenging trying to find God's place in my life, let alone trying to name it
Pour your Spirit into me, your Spirit of love and grace. Guide me, renew me.

• I feel alone in this
Open my eyes to see those around me who are part of your great community. Show me how to welcome them into my life.

You may like to close with this prayer that we'll be saying in church this Sunday and end with the Lord's Prayer.

"Faithful God, most merciful judge: you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen"

Journalling

This is a great time to begin journalling, if you haven't already done so. Use your journal to make notes of anything that you become aware of: questions, a realization, something that gives you peace, something that invites you to move in a certain direction.

With others:

You can amend this outline to make it an activity for a group to do. In that case, one approach could be to use the African Bible Study method. Here's a pared-down version:

1. one person reads the passage out loud, s l o w l y
2. each person identifies what word or phrase seems to catch their attention
3. each shares this word or phrase around the group. NO discussion
4. another person reads the passage s l o w l y using another translation if possible.
5. each person identifies where this touches their life today
6. each shares. NO discussion

7. passage is read another time by another person
 8. each person then says, or writes "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do, or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?"
 9. each person shares their answer. NO discussion
- Close by re-reading the passage and saying the Lord's prayer together.

Not having any discussion helps make the passage and the way it speaks to you real rather than theoretical. It's also respectful of the fact that the Holy Spirit is doing the work in speaking to us through the reading.

Please note: I am happy for you to share these outlines with whomever you please, but if you choose to do so, kindly ensure you acknowledge the source.

I'd appreciate your input on the content and on what works and doesn't work. pastor-ilze@standrewslatvian.org

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Isa 44:6-8

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.
Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

Psalms 86:11-17

Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name for ever.
For great is your steadfast love towards me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving-maid.
Show me a sign of your favour,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Romans 8:12-25

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh,

to live according to the flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Future Glory

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

MT 13:24-30, 36-43

The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat

24 He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" ²⁸He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" ²⁹But he

replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." '

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' ³⁷ He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!