

“What are You Waiting For?”

Matthew 28:1-10

Easter Sunday, 23 March 2008

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Prayer.

Good writing

Moves the soul;

It points one

to some deeper meaning

Or truth.

Good writing

Isn't necessarily entertaining;

Indeed, it can often be

Controversial

Frustrating

Even Provoking.

Good writing works on many levels

And in doing so,

Becomes memorable.

Thirty years ago

As a high-school sophomore

I read such a play

And it has been etched in my mind ever since.

Samuel Beckett's play

“*Waiting for Godot*”

is about two men,

Estragon and Vladimir

Waiting for someone promised

But who never arrives.

They wait all day,

Every day,

by the side of the road;

their only interruption being

the daily meeting with a traveler, named

Lucky,

and his slave, Pozzo.

It is a play that is torturous to read,

Painful to watch,

But unforgettable in reflection.

Indeed, the *Massachusetts Review* states

It is "the most significant English language play

of the 20th century."¹

As the play unfolds

¹ Berlin, N., ‘Traffic of our stage: Why Waiting for Godot?’ in *The Massachusetts Review*, Autumn 1999

It becomes apparent to the audience
That each day is a repeat of the previous.
Many attempts have been made
to analyze Beckett's deeper message.
Some thought the message politico-
That is, this play is an allegory of the cold
war.

(It was first produced in 1953.)
Freudian's assume "Waiting for Godot"
Is a description of the Id and Ego.
Jungian's attempt to explain that the
feminine Estragon
Is balanced with the complimentary
masculine, Vladimir.
Existentialist suggest that this play
Articulates questions that everyone asks
Such as, "What is the meaning of human
existence?"
Beckett's use of the story of the two thieves
crucified with Jesus
And the ensuing discussion of repentance
Has given many the belief that "Godot" must
certainly
Be religious in nature.
Yet Beckett curses God for his apparent
absence
And he curses God for his omniscient
presence,
Believing religion had no more depth than
an old school tie.²
It may sound like "waiting for God"
But Godot in French is slang for "boot."
So much for that idea.

And yet they wait.

This is not a sermon on the literary criticism
Of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot."
But this is an Easter sermon,
And the focus is clearly upon waiting.

² An interview with Tom Driver in Graver, L.
and Ferderman, R., (Eds.) Samuel Beckett:
the Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1979, p 217

Mary, and Mary the woman from Magdala
wait.
They wait until the Sabbath is over,
Until the first of the week
To go to the tomb
and prepare the broken body of Jesus
for burial, and decomposition.
If his body was going to return to the dust of
the universe,
Then, at least, it would do so
Having been washed and prepared by loving
hands.

He is not hear,
He is risen,
The angel reported.
Go and tell his disciples,
He waits for them in Galilee.
He will see them there.

They obediently turn to fulfill the angel's
request,
Only to meet Jesus face-to-face,
Matthew recorded.
Seeing the dead
Returned to life,
they fall down and worship him.
The religious authorities and Roman proxies
beat him,
Broke him,
And pierced him with a sword.
Three days cold,
his body was decomposing
in a sealed, guarded tomb.
There was no doubt about his death.
So how is it
he now stood before them
living, breathing, alive?

Whether you are a believer or not,
A regular pew sitter,
Or a semi-annual reluctant
"OK, I'll go to church with you,
but only to preserve family unity,"
kind of person;

I've got to believe that each of us
Express the deepest feelings
And frustrations
Of waiting.
Waiting for Jesus' promised return.
Waiting for there to be a relevant connection
with our personal world,
Waiting for there to be revealed some
deeper meaning:
Why are we here?
And what are we waiting for?

So we wait.
We wait, like our fathers and mothers
waited, before our time.
We wait, just as our ancestors waited, for
decades and centuries.
We wait.

Some of us wait for life to end.
I had an uncle Dick,
Whose life philosophy
Was summed up:
"Life is a beach, then you die."
(Except he didn't use the word beach).
Oh, he had a great life
While he was here,
But then, one day he was gone.
According to him,
He was gone for good.
Don't wait up for him.
Don't leave the light on.
The fine line between ecstasy and despair
Living in this fatalistic universe
Would have brought my life to a premature
end.
I'm not here
simply waiting to die.

Other of us wait for tomorrow.
My break is coming just around the next
corner.
I'm going to be famous,
I'm going to be known,
I'm going to change the world.

It's destiny that is keeping me going.
It is the hope of a better job
That keeps one constantly searching the
want ads.
It is the hope for a more meaningful
relationship
That keeps one having affairs.
The hope of winning it big that
Makes one greedy, selfish, and alone.
This life philosophy is
Win at everything;
Own everything;
Control everything;
Kick butt and take no prisoners.
This may work on the playing field
Or in the boardroom
But ultimately
It leads nowhere.

The Easter story gives us
yet something else to wait for.
There is
a reasonable answer
For life's questions.
We are not here to suffer and die.
We are not here to command, control, and
conquer.
We are here to wait for Jesus.
We wait for his promised return.
We wait for him cleanse us
Once and for all,
of our sins.
We wait for him to take us home –
- to our eternal home, to be with him.

In the meantime, we wait.
We don't idly wait.
We don't wait without purpose.
In this season of waiting
We are called to reach in, reach out, and
reach up.

We reach in to draw out our praise and
thanksgiving.
While we wait,

We are meant to worship the Lord, our God;
To say thank you for all the gifts we've been
given
And to praise his holy name.

While we wait
We reach out to the poor, the oppressed,
the dispossessed.
We reach out to the hungry, the homeless,
the widow, and the orphaned.
We reach out with invitation
That others might follow Jesus.
We reach out, because this is what Jesus
tells us to do.
We are here to heal, to help, to bind, to
shelter, to warm, to feed, forgive, and to
love.

While we wait
We reach up to God,
With open hands, hearts, and minds;
We reach up with our petitions and
intercessions.
We reach up with our confessions.
We reach up confident that God is the
source of all our strength.
We reach up knowing
God is the source of all our sustenance.
And we reach up with a faith only a loving
God could first provide;
proclaiming
it is in God
In whom I
ultimately place
every ounce of my trust.

My beloved,
Who are you waiting for?

I'm waiting for Jesus.
Would you like to join me?
Amen.