

Waiting

Psalm 130

How good are you at waiting? For a bus? For the post to arrive? For a meal to be ready? For an exam result. For a plant to grow? For the result of a medical test? For lockdown to end? For Christmas? Let's hope the last two are not connected!

What about the waiting of parents, and the wider family, as a child grows up? Waiting for the first words; the first steps; the first celebrations; the first day at school. With the ongoing restrictions around services, Alexandra's baptism was, if I remember rightly, to have been at some point at the beginning of this year. I hoped we might manage to get it in before she graduated from university.

Our reading this morning, Psalm 130 has a remarkable history in the spiritual life of the Church. It came to be known as *De Profundis*, the opening words of its Latin version. It speaks of the deep places of longing and loss, and the need for forgiveness, and hope. It is a Psalm that speaks about the human condition which has so much to do with waiting.

The German reformer Martin Luther called the Psalm, "a proper master and doctor of Scripture"; in other words, it teaches the basic truth of our gospel faith. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, heard the psalm sung on the afternoon before he had the transformative experience that sharpened and deepened and transformed what he believed and how he believed and why he believed.

The psalm is an individual prayer for help, which is why it often gives words to people in the difficult times of life. In the difficult days, when life seems stalled, or even going backwards, it is as if our very souls wait, and watch. Like watchmen on the walls of a city, waiting through the long dark night duty, longing for morning to come. Will it ever come, will the light ever come?

Yes it will, and with the light, hope.

Alexandra's baptism this morning, like every baptism I believe, is one such moment in the life of the church. It comes at a time when we have been waiting and waiting and waiting. Waiting to gather again. Waiting to sing again. Waiting to see the whole faces of the people beside us again.

Waiting for not the faintly ridiculous parroting of, 'Freedom Day', from our less salubrious politicians and tabloids who have twisted the concept and cheapened its meaning into some louche laissez faire where we can do whatever we please and whenever we please without any consequence. There's no freedom without responsibility, there's no freedom without morality, there's no freedom without integrity.

The waiting and longing and coming of morning that the Psalmist sings about, and that people who believe, is not simply an expression of helplessness in the face of what feel like the overwhelming odds of life that seem stacked against us. We are not left waiting forever, though it may feel like it when we are in the midst. We're not left in the darkness, though it may feel like it when dawn seems postponed. "Hope in the Lord!" says the Psalmist. "For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will redeem Israel..."

Now, this might seem a lot to be heaping on the shoulders of little Alexandra on the day of her baptism. But what we have shared at this service is this: that for her, and for all of us who have been baptised, this promise, this blessing, this coming dawn, this light, this hope, is for us. Witnessing the Sacrament of Baptism reminds all of us that there is forgiveness, and there is peace, and there is joy, and as our souls wait for the Lord, whatever we are waiting for; and as we watch for the morning, whatever new day we hope will dawn in our lives, the good news is: there is hope in God.

You may have forgotten this, in the busy-ness of living; it may have faded from when you first believed. Maybe it's time to reconnect to this faith, this Church, this belief. Because the waiting is ending, the darkness is fading, and promise and light are on their way. Today's baptism reminds us of this. "...Hope in the Lord! For with the Lord is steadfast love."

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Amen