

8th April 2020

Waiting

“They also serve who only stand and wait.”

John Milton, Sonnet 16

No one likes waiting. Out in the Forth, opposite our village, are several cruise ships and oil-tankers, perhaps being deep cleaned, or anchored safely so they don't clutter up a harbour berth, or waiting to come into Rosyth or Grangemouth ... Or maybe, like the rest of us, they're waiting for some clue when this Covid-19 crisis is likely to be over and we can get back to some kind of normality. And waiting is hard.

W H Vanstone wrote *The Stature of Waiting* in 1982 while he was Canon Residentiary at Chester Cathedral. It's his protest against "over-activism", especially in the Church. We've come to value action over passivity, he says. So he suggests we take a lesson from Jesus in Holy Week, and the change from activity to meekness, action to humility.

Is this change something we should find too, reconnecting with some of the truths we've overlooked in our emphasis on doing over being? How hard that is for those of us who are constantly busy, even in this enforced shut-down; how challenging it is to be still and powerless; how difficult it is simply to be. So in our waiting time, might we, as Vanstone suggests, begin to embrace the values and ideals we might have abandoned in our focus on busyness?

Of course, waiting is hard. But, if we *have* to wait till all of this is over, might we learn something? For in our waiting, as Milton suggests, we can still be the ones who serve.

A prayer for today

God of the waiting time, help me to put my life in balance: to be satisfied when I 'know', and comfortable with 'not knowing'; to be pleased when I am busy and value times when I am still; to know that you call me in times of waiting, and listening, and learning, there to know I'm still serving you. Amen.

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