

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Cycle B

Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 20a, 20c-26 and 1John 4:11-16

There has been a big whoop-dee-do on Instagram and Twitter this past week because a customer at an IHOP was told there was a long wait time to be seated and he chose to leave. The customer was Adam Sandler, a famous comedian and actor. Many people are upset that Sandler was made to wait. I am agog both that anyone would think famous people should receive preferential treatment and that people choose to spend so much time discussing such a minor event. Here we are on the threshold of reopening after over a year of thinking long and hard about what we truly value and how we wish to spend our time. I had assumed this meant we realized that human beings were more important than possessions, busyness and status. I had hoped we would be committing ourselves to a cleaner world, concern for all people and a healthier spirituality. I guess there's waiting and then there's waiting.

The seventh Sunday of Easter is a waiting zone as well. Jesus commissioned the apostles, sent them to Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit and ascended into heaven. Angels asked the stunned apostles, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?" We all know that experience of wondering what just happened and where do we go from here. Acts 1 shows us what they did with their time of waiting. To show the continuity between God's covenant with the Jewish people and God's relationship with the emerging Church, Peter ensures that they had twelve male apostles to parallel the twelve male children of Jacob. Although the gospel of Luke is famous for its emphasis on Jesus' inclusion of women, the same writer mentions women here in Acts only in passing. After naming each of the apostles, vs 14 says, "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers." We never hear about these other folks again. The language quickly shifts from the inclusive "about 120 *anthropoi*" or people, to *andres adelphoi* or male siblings and only men are considered for the twelfth apostle. In this period of waiting, the values of the patriarchal culture eroded all progress Jesus had made to set up an egalitarian community. Women will only play minor roles in Acts, even though in actuality they were leaders and sponsors of Christian communities. Then, as now, there's waiting and then there's waiting.

How should disciples wait? 1John gives us its persistent message: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another." Everything else is not worthy of our time. 1John continues, "No one has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another, God remains in us, and [God's] love is brought to perfection in us." In an obtuse style, the author is laying out the missionary task of all Christians: we show God to the world through our love. We can be sure of this because of the perfect verb tenses in verse 16: "We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us." In ancient Greek, the perfect tense conveys a completed action with present consequences. So, if we have experienced God's love, we must become love for the world. Love cannot be contained. It naturally flows out to include others. It recognizes pain, loneliness, anxiety and want and mercifully fills in the need just as gentle rain seeks all the cracks in the parched earth and fills them. Our task is to love the world into knowing and believing in God.

One other note about "knowing" in the Biblical sense: it is experiential. We know God's love because we have experienced it. God's love is the gorgeous home planet God made for us. It is the support, the caress, the presence of our loved ones. It is the laughter of children and the righteousness of just and kind actions. We live *in love*. Therefore, since we have been commissioned to act out the love God has for us, our pandemic "marking time" should be a time of reflecting on how to love better once we get back out there. Extensive, national discussion of Adam Sandler's IHOP experience disappears. Pouting over having to meet on Zoom disappears. The frenetic rush to return to normal disappears. Tender determination to be love in the world shapes the waiting time of the followers of Jesus.

- ❖ How have you experienced God's love this week? How do these experiences shape your knowledge and belief in God?
- ❖ Which parts of your waiting time behavior have prepared you to be love in the world?

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