

REFLECTION –‘THE IN BETWEEN SEASON OF WAITING’ based on Acts 1:6-14

Luke invites us into a transitional space: the disciples stand between what they’ve known and what they’re unable to fully name. They watch, they wonder, they pray, they wait. The in-between isn’t a void but a gestational period: a holy pause if you like in which God’s future begins to loosen its edges into the present. In our own lives, we experience similar seasons a bit like the change of seasons witnessed in the changing leaves on the trees, when some leaves are coloured the beautiful autumn colours and others retain the summer greens, moments when the next step isn’t clear, when plans falter, when the promised movement of the Spirit seems to demand the patience of listening more than a guarantee of direction. And then the wind comes up and blows – changing everything, the pause has ended.

What kinds of in-between seasons do we experience? They arrive as seasons of uncertainty, when the ground shifts under long-formed expectations. Perhaps we stand between the ache of grief and the stubborn hope that life can be meaningful again. Or when those who are still gainfully employed hover between career milestones, ageism, relational shifts, or health challenges, unsure which path will end, or unfold or perhaps, whether a new path even exists. There are times when a long held dream we’ve cherished feels deferred, and we must learn to inhabit the space before the dawn rather than sprint toward a sunrise that hasn’t yet broken through the darkness of night. In-between seasons also surface when we discern a gap between our actions and God’s purposes—a gap that demands us to make real changes, honesty, and new adjustments in our priorities. And there are seasons of faith where the questions themselves become a form of prayer: not just asking for results, but for the discernment to

recognise God's presence and the courage to move when the Spirit breathes on us and within us.

If we could ask Jesus any question in such a moment, it might be one such as how can/do we discern the shape of God's future when the present is opaque. We could also ask: What does faithful obedience look like when your plan defies our intentions? How can we recognise the Spirit's movement in a world crowded with competing voices and urgent needs? How do we keep our heart, mind and soul open to receive a yes, a no, or a wait, without turning it into a form of self-preserving anxiety or brittle hope? And we would ask: help us to see your restoration at work today in ways we can't anticipate, especially in communities and people that feel overlooked or dismissed?

The disciples' preoccupation in verse 6, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" makes us stop and think about the risk of misreading their longing. Their question isn't simply political; it is a longing driven by history, memory, and the ache for God's decisive intervention. Yet Jesus redirects their gaze beyond their own nation's story. Our own expectations can similarly narrow our sight, binding us to past narratives or to a specific timetable for God's action. For instance, we might anticipate a single grand intervention, the exact form in which God's deliverance should come, only to discover God working through ordinary people doing ordinary things that make a huge change in the lives of others, through small, persistent acts of mercy, through communities choosing to risk love in the face of fear, through the quiet faithfulness of those who serve unseen. The call then becomes releasing our own stories and asking: Where are we most prone to confine God to our preferred outcome, and what would it cost me to release that control and to trust what God is actually doing? These are things we can all be involved in. With verse 14 offering us a sobering reminder.

The prayerful community Luke is with in Acts includes women, speaking of them only in general terms rather than naming their contributions. Luke named the men and the only mention of Mattias who was Judas' replacement. This made me wonder who in our own communities, who are the women whose names we aren't so familiar with, whose labor toward healing, justice, and hospitality remains unsung? Perhaps it is the woman who hosts a meal for strangers, the pastoral carer who keeps vigil at a hospital bed, the friend who walks with someone through grief, or the mentor who refuses to surrender to cynicism. Honoring them requires more than gratitude in worship; it requires intentional action: naming their contributions in meetings, sharing leadership, ensuring equity in decision-making, and creating spaces where their gifts can be celebrated and amplified. Naming unnamed labor is itself a form of justice; it aligns our community with the biblical pattern that God sees and lifts up the vulnerable and the overlooked. Today is the beginning of National Volunteers Week, and as such we will have an opportunity to see the great work that's being done by so many in our congregation and you'll hear more about that later.

The image of the followers "devoted themselves to prayer" (v. 14) invites us to reflect on what they were praying for. They surely prayed for discernment, the capacity to see where the Spirit was moving, to recognise their own complicity in fears and biases, and to align their hearts with God's larger love story. They prayed for courage to wait and for wisdom to act when directions became clear. Their prayer probably included intercession for their neighbors, an immediate, tangible concern for the broken, the poor, the outcast, alongside petitions for the church's mission and unity. Today, what prayers rise from deep within us? We may pray for healing and provision, for justice for the oppressed, for reconciliation in communities torn by conflict, and for a renewed

boldness to bear witness to the gospel in a fragile world. Prayer, in this sense, isn't a shield from hardship but a practice that reaffirms us in it, reminding us that we belong to a God who is always drawing near to us, who calms our fears, and who invites us to participate in healing the world.

We began today's worship responsively saying Psalm 68 and I finish this reflection with it. It presents a divine fullness of heart: God as a parent to the orphan and protector of widows. Knowledge of God's heart for the vulnerable shapes both our prayers and our actions. If God positions God's self as defender of the vulnerable, then our communities are called to *mirror* that attitude. We are invited to cultivate hospitality that meets people in their vulnerability, to advocate for policies that protect the marginalised, and to cultivate relationships that honour the dignity of every person. Such a God-shaped imagination expands our prayers from private petitions toward public, costly acts of mercy and justice where love is felt and where love creates endless possibilities reshaping our rhythms of life. Generosity becomes habitual, service becomes integration rather than tokenism, and power structures within the church making space to serve the least. In practice, this may mean creating spaces for people who are often unheard to lead; it may mean partnering with organisations that serve the orphan and the widow; it may mean converting our gatherings into catalysts of compassion, where worship flows naturally into acts of mercy.

In-the-middle seasons, then, become not just times to endure but *opportunities* to be formed. The not-yet-now of God's kingdom invites us to pick up our cross with hope, to trust God's timing over our own, and to learn the patient art of listening. It is in these times that we can learn to let go of our own agendas, to honor those who have been silenced, and to pray with humility for the

courage to participate in God's mission with both vulnerability and perseverance.

As we move forward, may we carry the memory of the disciples' question, the humility of their waiting, and the care for the vulnerable that Psalm 68 models. May our prayers be a conduit for discernment and courage, and may our communities become a living testimony of God's heart—a place where the in-between becomes a doorway into a deeper participation in God's redeeming work. Christ's ascension leads us into the in between season of His moving from this world into the next until His triumphant return when this season ends with the ending of the darkness and the beginning of the bright new dawn's light. Until that day arises, we have the Holy Spirit to be our guide and intercessor with us always.

Amen

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, who ascended in glory and left earthly sight, lift our hearts into the not-yet-now of your kingdom. In our seasons of waiting, between old certainties and new ways, grant us discernment to hear your Spirit and courage to act with humble mercy. May we honour the unseen builders of love, especially the vulnerable, and name their gifts in our gatherings. Fill us with hopeful patience, steadfast prayer, and generous service, until your return breaks the night with dawn. In your holy name we pray. Amen