

The Small, Slow Work of God

What are you waiting for? If we know what we are waiting for, then we will know how to wait. And we will know how long to wait. Because if what we are waiting for is truly good and worthwhile, we will be willing to wait as long as it takes.

What are we waiting for? We wait for the small, slow work of God. God comes to be with us, Emmanuel, in a manger. It's all quite unexpected. There seems quite a big gap between what God's Chosen People were expecting and what they were given in the Christ Child. Likewise for us, there is often a yawning gap between what we expect to happen and what in fact does.

Be alert! Watch! God does not enter the world like a Hollywood superhero. The King of the Jews, all the hopes and dreams of a people, is born in the small and obscure little town Bethlehem. Not in Jerusalem. Think of God entering the world in Spokane rather than San Francisco. Or Bell Gardens rather than Beverly Hills.

Be alert. Pay attention. Hiddenness and smallness are majesty. The wounded and the weak, the last, the lost, the littlest and the least are to be seated at the head table according to God's promise. They, too, are of infinite value. Because God is found there. Where and with whom you least expect.

Look! Even among the poor, the sick and the ignorant, the small, slow work of God can be done and is being done. The disciple of Jesus is to live and work in hope. Hope is not the same thing as cheery optimism. Hope isn't wishful thinking. Remember that in the lifetime of some of us, the Berlin Wall came down, Apartheid crumbled, peace came to Northern Ireland (at least for the moment). Illiteracy rates worldwide are decreasing. God is at work in a corrupt world. But God's work is slow.

We cannot right every wrong, but we can never stop hoping in the slow small work of God. God's presence is constant. Look to those people and events, those places where you least expect God to be present. There you might find what you are looking for: the small slow work of God lying in a manger in Bethlehem.

Sometimes you have to learn how to see anew. And how to wait. Again. And again.

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