

**Wait ... Eagerly!**

***I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.***

Let's say you are having some pain. What would you want someone to say to you? Some may say, "Keep a stiff upper lip." I am not sure what stiff lips have to do with suffering. Others may say, "Look at the bright side" or its cousin, "Every cloud has its silver lining." Does it? Still others may say, "Be positive; don't let it get you down." Easier said than done. You know what Lord says to people who are hurting and suffering? He says it in our text from Romans: wait. Our word from Romans today is "longing" as we are tired of this suffering world and long to be in heaven. God today tells us to wait because relief is coming, soon.

***I. Wait patiently through suffering.***

I read a book by a counselor who made this startling observation. He said that pain is good. Imagine a little girl who broke her arm. Pain was good for that little girl because it told her that there was something wrong with her arm. Pain also was good for her because it told her to treat that arm with special care. Pain told the rest of the body that there was an injury and triggered all the body's systems to begin repairs on that arm.

All of that is true. But pain is pain and suffering is suffering. We don't know what it would be like to live in a world without pain. Ask a blind man to describe his world and he would say dark. Likewise, ask sinful human beings who live in a sinful world to describe their world and they will say painful and short. We can't imagine a world without pain. Everyday we experience pain whether it is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual pain.

But we are not the only ones who feel pain. All of creation suffers as well. ***"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage of decay."*** Creation is in pain. Ask the Robin that is caught by the cat or deer starving during a harsh winter. But this text tells us that the world is an innocent bystander. The world suffers because of man, and not because man hunts or pollutes. It suffers because mankind sinned. It was not the creeping things on the earth that rebelled against God and brought death and suffering to the world, it was man as Paul states earlier in Romans, ***"Sin entered the world through one man."*** When man first broke God's law in the Garden, God not only cursed man, he also cursed the ground.

Earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, famine, rock slides, fires, volcanoes, etc. are all the result of man's sin against God. Remember, the first deaths that occurred in the world were that of animals whom God killed to make clothing for Adam and Eve to cover up the shame of their sin. No wonder the world groans.

But is there any good that come out of this pain? Creation is groaning. They say dozens of species become extinct every day. What does that say? Whenever we hear of famines and thunderstorms and forest fires and the death of animals, of floods or drought or whatever, what do all these things say to us? They are telling us something better is coming. ***"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."*** Excuse the pun, but that is a pregnant phrase. What is going on is like the labor of a woman. First there are months of inconvenience. Then the contractions begin which means that dad better drive mom to the hospital. The contractions intensify and then the baby is born. That is what is going on right now. The world is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. Every natural disaster is a contraction.

That means something special is about to happen. Childbirth pain is intense, but when the baby is born, the pain goes away and the joy of having a baby takes over. All of creation is groaning in the pain of childbirth. This means that something special will happen and when it does, the pain will go away. What is that special thing? When the sons of God are revealed.

***II. Wait eagerly for our future deliverance.***

***"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed."*** The Greek here is a picture of waiting with your neck stretched out. Imagine you are at a parade. You stand on your tiptoes stretching your head over the crowd to see if it started yet. Likewise creation, and all believers are on their tiptoes eagerly waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. The sons of God are not the angels. It is believers. It is us! Again, it is like childbirth. The labor is very painful, but it all goes away when the child is born. When the Sons of God are revealed, that means an end to pain the beginning of glory.

But you may say, "Wait a minute. Aren't the sons of God revealed already? Don't we know who they are?" In part, true. We see the fruits of faith among believers. We see them worshipping God and not some idol. But let's say there is a man who drives a rusted out, twenty year old car. He lives in a house that looks like it should be condemned. He's dressed in rags. It would be hard for you to believe that this man is a millionaire. Likewise, while in this sinful world, we don't look like millionaires. We suffer and die like all the rest. The Christian doesn't look like a child of God and often he doesn't feel like a child of God. But the day is coming when he will not only look like a child of God but also feel like one too. That is what is meant when it says, ***"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed."*** John expressed the same thought in his first letter, ***"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him."***

We shall be like him. In heaven we will not stand before God afraid and shamed like Adam and Eve. We will appear like Jesus in all his holiness. In fact, because of Christ, that is how God sees us now, but in heaven, we will see it too. Cleansed of sin by Christ's blood, we are robed in his righteousness. I know. It is hard to see that now, but when Christ returns, believers will be revealed. We will see it and feel it.

Even our bodies will be like Christ's. God did not send his son into this world to save spirits who will live in some vague spirit world in heaven. He came to save both body and soul. Yes, Jesus came to die and free us from the guilt of sins. But the promise of the resurrection is a promise of the resurrection of the body, too. We don't know how it will happen or how it will look, but even creation will be freed.

Christ died for our sins. We are forgiven. God will give us future glory in heaven. We know this in our heads. We feel the Spirit working such conviction in our hearts. But that doesn't mean that our bodies are suddenly dead to pain. We still suffer and feel discouraged. At moments like these the devil is working his hardest. Don't feel ashamed if you long for heaven, if you prefer to be there now. I don't know how many elderly people, bent over from years of hardship, worn out and tired, who can't wait to go to heaven. So don't be ashamed if you long for heaven.

But God's advise to us who still suffer now is, "Wait." And to help us wait, he makes a comparison for us. ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*** There are some things worth comparing. You need to compare how much gas you have in your car with the miles you need to drive home or else you may be walking part of it. But the sufferings we endure now are not even worth comparing with the glory that awaits. Now the suffering we face is great indeed. But imagine these sufferings as pocket change. They don't compare to the millions of dollars that represent our glory in heaven. As intense as our suffering may be, our future is so much more intense that it overshadows what we endure now. That is why the Scripture usually speaks in the negative when describing that future glory; God is using the familiar, our world of sin and suffering, to give us just a thumb-nail sketch of heaven: no more sorrow, no more tears, no more pain, hunger thirst, death. This will happen when the sons of God, believers, will be revealed.

That is where our other readings fit in. God promises us his Word and his Sacraments are like rain. They water the crops and cause them to grow before it returns to heaven. Wondering? Doubting? Don't feel like a child of God? Tired of waiting? God's Word and Sacraments water you and builds up hope and endurance that you are a dear child of God, and one day you will see and feel it yourself. As Paul concluded, ***"But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."***

So wait. That may sound like cold and uncaring to someone who is suffering. But it is the greatest news if it is accompanied by the promise of relief. A doctor says to a suffering patient, "Wait just a couple minutes longer, then the pain killer will kick in." Likewise, to those suffering in this world, God says, "Wait," because relief is on the way. INJ Amen.