

Psalm 27 concludes with, “**Wait** for the Lord; be strong and take heart and *wait* for the Lord.”

Waiting is one of the toughest things we do in life. Don’t you think? We get antsy and anxious! We march out ahead without knowing which way we should go – hoping that some action is better than no action: that perhaps doing something is better than doing nothing at all. The psalmist is clear, “**wait!**”

I believe that if I read Psalm 27 every day of the year and I’d still be impatient with one thing or another.

Patience -- is a tough word for Christians. We joke about it, “I prayed for patience but I’m just not getting it fast enough!”

A teacher was helping one of her kindergarten students put his boots on. He asked for help and she could see why. With her pulling and him pushing, the boots still didn’t want to go on. By the time she got the second boot on, she had worked up a sweat.

She almost whimpered when the little boy said, “Teacher, they’re on the wrong feet.” She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn’t any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as they worked together to get the boots back on – this time on the right feet.

He then announced, “These aren’t my boots.” She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, “Why didn’t you say so?” like she wanted to.

Once again she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off.

He then said, “They’re my brother’s boots. My mom made me wear them.” She didn’t know if she should laugh or cry. She mustered up the grace to wrestle the boots on his feet again.

The teacher said, “Now, where are your mittens? He said, “I stuffed them in the toes of my boots...”

Funny or not, it’s true that we are all impatient by nature. We live in a microwave generation. We obtain everything faster than ever before, yet it’s still not good enough, not fast enough for our speedy preferences. Nuked popcorn still takes too long to pop. Newly married couples want everything their parents had after 25 years of marriage (new cars, house, extra spending money).

Christians are action-oriented people. We like to do, go and get things done. So, why wait? We have heard over and over that “good things come to those who wait” and that the end result is well worth the time spent. **Yet, we want what we want, right when we want it.** Why can’t we be content to sit back and trust the Lord’s timing over our own anxiety and urgency?

Because then we give up control! Then, we have to surrender!

Having patience means surrendering control of our lives to the Lord. It means saying, "I'll wait for You, Lord, because I trust you." That's what the psalmist does but we know it's easier said than done. It feels like we're living on the edge. Uncomfortable! **Anxiety** overwhelms the **adventure** God maybe taking us on.

We don't know what God is up to! We can't see the entire picture. We don't have God's vision. We feel blindfolded. Our view is limited -- we stumble around, confused as to which direction we should go. And unfortunately we ignore the voice of our Lord instructing us to "**wait and serve the Lord!**"

Consider that perhaps, God is patiently shaping you to do something you haven't imagined -- to serve in a way that hasn't crossed your mind. Perhaps God wants to find more trust in you for what God is planning to do with you. The waiting period is a period of preparation, of discernment. The process of discernment is the same for anyone of us, but also for the church body. We, at Valley PC, are currently in the midst of waiting, preparing and discerning the next steps God is directing for this church. And we get impatient! We get anxious!

Our goal as Christians is to have faith in God, to do God's will and to have such confidence and trust that God's will is good for us. I believe confidence in God takes time and discernment. Our spiritual journeys are a lifetime journeys, not just a mountain-top experience. So, part of being Christian is waiting -- the other

part is serving. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans provides a beautiful explanation of the marks of a Christian's life of service.

We offer ourselves as living sacrifices. This is how we serve God. We set an example of behavior for others to witness. We don't conform to the world, but we become transformed by the renewing of our minds; through hearing God's word. This is a call to a new way of thinking. We surrender our will in order to understand God's will, by being holy, living sacrifices for God's purposes.

In a world of idols, becoming "living sacrifices" leads us into a true worship of God. As we become transformed individuals we become a transformed community, which is what I believe you desire here at Valley Pres. Church.

The Apostle reminds us to not think too highly of ourselves. You hear people say, don't get a big head -- lead lives of moderation --live humbly because we are each, one member of the body of Christ. We have different gifts, each one building up the body of Christ. This is the beauty of God's world: **Each of us gifted to serve! Serving God by serving others is how we practice our faith -- so that we better understand what we believe. Faith and practice go together.**

Today is Deacon Sunday. The Greek word from which we get Deacon means *ministry; serving*. We are in the midst of nominating a new slate of Deacons and Elders. Consider your gift and your ministry call by serving God

through *service* within this church body. Everyone has a gift, some aspect of themselves that can be shared with the community of faith.

Here's a tough saying from the Apostle. Ensure that love is sincere. If you have ever felt insincere love, you are left empty and unfulfilled. Make your love sincere. Hate evil, cling to what is good. What happened in Charlottesville had both good and evil in the people's actions. **Let us cling to what is good!**

God always calls us to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Look around our church family, this community, our home state, the United States, are we devoted to loving one another? Do we honor others above ourselves? Are we doing something in our church that impedes God's will for us, for the world?

My favorite verse in this passage is, "*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*" How do you keep serving the Lord with enthusiasm and delight, with a sense of God's spirit within you when you become impatient and disappointed? Ask a Deacon, ask an Elder, ask anyone who volunteers in this church. How do they keep going? We can't, without waiting and trusting God.

I know this is not easy to do, but the Apostle says, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." I believe that joy comes from serving; serving comes after we wait and discern what it is God has called us to do. And

what does God call us to do, **“Share with God’s people who are in need.”** That’s the bottom line for all Christians.

I believe that none of us can go wrong when we wait to discern our gifts and then begin to serve God’s people who are in need – I guess you can say I waited. I was 38 years old when I became a Stephen Minister and 44 when I began seminary.

We can’t go wrong when we embody Christian core values -- when we love with sincerity, when we cling to the good, when we honor others above ourselves, when we devote ourselves to brotherly love, then we make Valley Pres. Church an effective and meaningful church. The challenge for us and for the church, is to name, articulate and live out our faith community’s life, as we are “called out” of this world. You have done well since 1978 and may you continue to be guided by God and his ever-present love. Have we **“waited”** long enough? Then, let us step out in faith, in trust, full of confidence and serve the Lord with joyful and generous hearts. Amen.