

But I Want It NOW

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EXODUS 24:12-18

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“But I Want It NOW” | Exodus 24:12-18 | Pastor Megan Berry

At this point in our scriptures, the Israelites have a bit of a relationship with one another and with God. We're not at the beginning of their story where they're crossing the Red Sea and starting their journey in the wilderness. By the time we reach our scripture passage for today, they've been traveling for a while, have faced a few hardships, and have reached Mt. Sinai where God gives them the 10 commandments, we get several chapters on other laws that the Israelites are to follow, and then finally we reach this point where Moses meets God up on the mountain.

Our Exodus passage does feel a bit like the gospel passage. Both Moses and Jesus are up on a mountain with God, there's something big that happens to signify God's presence like a devouring flame or a dazzling light, the people around are utterly amazed at what is happening.

But there are also some key differences in these scriptures that I want to tease out. In the gospel passage, everything seemingly happens quickly. They get up to the mountain and then BAM BOOM, dazzling light, action, there's Elijah and Moses with Jesus and God's voice from the dazzling light telling Peter, James, and John to follow Jesus and calling him beloved.

But in our Exodus passage, there's a bit more time stretched into everything. God tells Moses to come up on the mountain, so he does, but it's not an instantaneous transformation. There are 6 days in this story where God is up on the mountain with the cloud covering it, and on the 7th day, God calls for Moses out of the cloud. It is after that week that Moses goes into the cloud with God. Yet again, we don't have an instantaneous transformation at this point either, our scripture tells us that Moses was in the cloud with God for 40 days and 40 nights before returning with instructions on how to build the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle and all of the other fun things the Israelites build during the later chapters of Exodus.

Our Exodus passage has a much slower pace to it than the gospel passage for the Transfiguration does and I want to sit with that tension for a moment.

I don't know about you all, but I know for myself there is a BIG struggle with patience and taking time to fully process something. And unfortunately I can't fully blame it on my ADHD brain. Our world is struck with an epidemic of NOW NOW NOW, MORE MORE MORE, IF YOU'RE NOT BEING PRODUCTIVE TIME IS WASTING AWAY, and that mindset is HARD to deprogram out of our brains, especially when everything feels like it's on fire and our brains just want something happy and healthy and normal to hold onto.

And the gospel passage could lead our brains to say “see transformation is instant, what are we doing wrong!” but our Exodus passage gives us a counter message to say “hey transformation takes time, maybe take a deep breath and pause.”

Now both scriptures are true and helpful, there are times when transformation can be a quick thing and we need to act quickly, but there are also plenty of times when transformation is going to take much longer than we'd like, so that is the tension that we're going to sit with and wrestle with this morning. Because our lives do feel like they're on fire. We are facing an incredible amount of information coming at us that demands our attention NOW NOW NOW and seemingly demands action NOW NOW NOW, but there is something tugging at my bones to remind me to take a deep breath, and yes act, but also prepare for the long haul.

And no, this is not simply the Presbyterian pastor arguing for more committee meetings and slowing things down. It's the Holy Spirit's nudge to find the balance and to remember that transformation more often than not takes time.

I'm going to use a very silly but hopefully impactful analogy to help prove this point. Several of you know that I LOVE to crochet, like it's a whole personality for me at this point. But that wasn't always the case, I didn't start crocheting until about 2 years ago and it was a PROCESS. Now one could say that I was a crocheter after my first 2 hour lesson when I learned the basics and could technically crochet decently. However, I didn't feel like a true crocheter until probably 9 months in, maybe longer, when I'd completed a few projects and was starting to dream and get creative with new projects. At some point, I moved from sticking directly with a pattern to recognizing what different stitches did and I got excited with creativity and started to fidget with patterns and make my own patterns up. At THAT point, I felt like a crocheter in my heart, I felt transformed in a way. I absolutely had been a crocheter all along, but there was something in my heart and body that took a bit longer to crystalize and feel real.

And I know, that's a very silly metaphor about a hobby, but I truly believe the heart of the message rings incredibly true for us as Christians today. Especially those of us who are trying to keep the Matthew 25 vision alive in our hearts and the world.

As a reminder for everyone, the Matthew 25 initiative that Covenant is a part of has 3 pillars to it.

- Dismantling Structural Racism
- Building Congregational Vitality
- Eradicating Systemic Poverty

These are LOFTY goals even if we bring it down to just Covenant Presbyterian Church instead of the world. This kind of transformation that will lead to the end of systemic poverty and dismantling racism unfortunately won't be an instantaneous thing, nor will it be something that we can complete in 40 days, though wouldn't that be nice to have a nice check list and end poverty in 40 days...

These dreams are going to take time and intention and attention to be transformed and become our reality. And with things taking time, also comes the reminder that life still happens. To look back at our Exodus passage for a moment, Moses didn't just vanish up into the mountains for a hot minute then pop back down with instructions. No, he took Joshua, Aaron, and Hur with him and gave them instructions for how to deal with life as it kept happening while he was away.

Because life continues to move and go. Our earth continues to turn. And while those two statements have probably put some of your bodies into a slight panic, I want to encourage you to take a deep breath and sit in this moment a while longer.

I don't know a whole lot about community organizing and fighting the injustices of the world, but one thing I know for sure is that a group will die if they never take a break, if they continue under the oppressive nagging feeling of GO GO GO NOW NOW NOW. I don't want to spoil Holy Week, but even Jesus took a moment to pray and be with God in the midst of knowing he was about to be arrested and killed.

So as we prepare for Lent and Ash Wednesday this week, I want you to take a moment and pause and breath. What slow transformations can you see forming already? What are you hoping to slowly work towards this Lent? How can you be intentional about poking that part of your brain that says, "EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE WORK YOURSELF TIL YOU FALL OVER" and refocus on the needs and have to's while also prioritizing rest and prayer?

We are in the midst of DIFFICULT times, and there is so much need and hurt in this world, and while I wish we could fix it all instantly today, it's going to take some time. So, I encourage you to pray and make a plan, to figure out what steps you can take when, but also to rest and remember that transformation takes time for all of us. Amen.