

2008-Proper-4A

Grace to you and Peace, from God, our Father and the Lord,
Jesus Christ.

The psalmist writes, "Be still, then, and know that I am God."

Boy! Are most of us terrible at that. If there is 10 seconds of silence in the liturgy, people begin to worry that someone has forgotten something (which, I might add, they may have), but instead of living into the stillness where God resides, we get anxious about getting on with things.

"Be Still then and Know I am God." The psalmist writes in God's voice, not a commanding voice so much as an invitation to know God in all of his majesty and all of his intimacy. "Be Still." It is such a hard thing to do. My mother used to have C-Span blaring all day long even if she were reading or cooking or even napping!

I am the world's greatest fidgeter. I would like to blame it on my back, or my knees or something – but I have been a fidgeter since I came out of the womb. Be still, God suggests, but most often fidgeting wins out. I would suggest that all of us to a greater or lesser extent would say the same thing. Our society does not value stillness. We are supposed to be busy. The 40 hour work week is a myth for most Americans. Even when we take time away from work we fill our lives with busy-ness. Recreation is really supposed to be about *re-* creation, making ourselves new in body and spirit. But we often come back to work more tired than when we left.

We fundamentally misunderstand God when he says Be Still. We take it as a command to *do* something. That there is some process that can bring us to stillness. We buy all kinds of books to teach us how to reach stillness.

Books on meditation, contemplative prayer, transcendentalism – you name it, there is a book about it somewhere.

But God uses the infinitive. He says Be still. He doesn't say get still. To be – that's what God said to Moses at the burning bush. We translate it as "I am", but in Hebrew it is the infinitive "to be". God simply is. He is not becoming or growing or getting old or learning this or doing that. God simply is. So if we want to know God as he IS, we must also be content to simply Be. We will only know God in the stillness of what it means to be. No amount of activity, music, preaching, liturgy, social action will bring us to the knowledge of God faster than simply being. All those to do's are important, but they find their fullness in our ability, first, to be still.

Elijah did not find God in the wind; he did not find God in the earthquake and he did not find God in the fire on Mount Horeb. He found God in a “sound of sheer silence” or as the King James Version puts it, He found God in, a “still small voice.”

“Be Still and know that I am God.” We are simply not good at simply being. We find our value in what we do and how well we do it. We expect to find God in prayer and in worship and in Good works. We expect to find God – and gain his approval - in the doings of our lives. But God finds us and loves us in *the being* of our lives.

Our immediate question becomes, “well then, how do we do it” – and we’ve got it wrong already. We need simply to be content in who we are, not what we do. God loves us for who we are – not because we do good things or even do bad things.

God loves us in our being, not our doing. He may be pleased or displeased in our doing, but he loves us as we are.

A lot of us, of course, don't like who we are. We want to be different. We want to grow in our faith. We want to learn to love others as Christ loves us, we want to do all those things that our Baptismal Covenant calls us to do. We want to know God better. But God suggests, "Be still – and know that I am God.

In other words get to know God as he knows you – who you are – right now. Meet God in the stillness of the present, not in the regrets of your past or the ambitions of your future. Be still – give yourself the precious time to know God as he knows you right now. And then you can begin the doing. First know God. Then seek his will for you - and then do his will.

Until you know God in the stillness of simply being you cannot learn his will for you, you can't really know fully his love for you.

So be Still. Rest in God's presence. Come to know that he loves you simply for who you are, right here and right now. And in knowing his love for you, you will be able to love him more deeply and will be able to share that love with the world.

Amen