

When does one thing become another during a transformation process? And if we are waiting for something to transform – what do we do while we are waiting? This can be both a practical and an esoteric question.

Over the past few weeks I have been very much enjoying Masterchef. On Friday night, the night of the final, I had to watch two episodes to catch up – party cause I didn't want to find out who had won before I had watched the proceeding episode. Masterchef is a cooking competition, with the contestants gradually gaining more and more skills and techniques, which as home cooks you might not otherwise acquire. In the final week I noticed that in almost every service there was a dish where the contestant, after much preparation had to place an element or dish in the oven or freezer and wait to see if would work. There was nothing to do but wait and see (and clean-up of course). One of the contestants, in fact the women who ended up winning said at one point, *I have put everything into this, have done all that I could, all I can do now is wait and hope that I have interpreted the instructions correctly.*

Then listening to the endless election result coverage over the past week I often heard a similar sentence from candidates – *I have put all I could in, I hope that we have read the electorate, but all I can do now is hope and see what the outcome is.*

In so much of our day to day life experiences there are things which we can control and things that we can't. And there are many times, when despite our best efforts and endeavours, our reading of the signs or the best preparations, that we can only know the outcome when it occurs. For those of you sitting exams in the coming weeks, this will also be the case – even when we might get a result we had hoped for, we still might not know what the outcome will bring.

There are things that we know, things that we hope for and things that we have to trust for.

Our Gospel reading today is Luke's version of Jesus Ascension into heaven. Luke's account is more subtle than some of the others. Luke divides his narrative into three movements, each with a distinctive theme. The past: The necessity of these things (vv. 44-47); The promise: The call to be witnesses (vv. 48-49) and "While You Wait": The call in the meantime (vv. 50-53).<sup>1</sup>

Luke is a clever writer, and unlike the other accounts, Luke places the ascension on the evening of Sunday of the resurrection. In a sense the timing doesn't matter, or how long Jesus appeared on earth after the resurrection, what matters is the message that is communicated; Luke is trying to make this as clear as he can for the disciples.

Luke starts with the 'what has been put into it' – the past journey with Jesus, reminding the disciples of what they have learnt through their time with Jesus, but also of the things they knew before which Jesus has built on. The labour, the effort, the intent and the learning has been intense, and should not be forgot in light of

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2385](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2385)

what is happening now, and what is to come. This is the same for us in our journey of faith. So often when we are rattled in our journey, or we lose sight of God in our lives we forget to look at where we have been. Surely the start of working out where we are, and where we are going is to look at where we have been. To consider the things we have known about God to be true in the past; to consider the things we have learnt, and to even ask as why we have the questions that we do. Jesus' disciples must have felt the earth slipping beneath their feet at the thought of being left alone, after all that happened in Jerusalem, and Luke's account draws them back in the words of Jesus to what they have known. What they do know!

Luke moves from the past confirmation onto what is promised; the *all that I have done, or all that I have listened to*. Luke's Jesus does not dwell simply on the past. He turns the focus next to his followers: "you are witnesses of these things" (v. 48). You have seen all these things, you know what I promised and what has been fulfilled – you need to trust this. Not unlike the anxiety of following the recipe exactly and then waiting by the oven door. You have to trust the tested outcome of those who have tried it before. That's why we have a recipe – because generally it works. Now faith is not a recipe, but we are not the first ones to have faith, nor are we the last. We are not the first people to have questions, or feel challenged, or want to put our own mark on how we live as Christians; each generation has done the same.

As Jesus prepares to leave his disciples he reminds them to not forget the promise, again to not forget what they know. We too need to remember the promise and be open to what it offers to us.

The final movement of Luke's account is the main event - Jesus' Ascension. Unique to this version is the prominence of "blessing." First, while Jesus ascends he blesses his followers, Second, after worshiping and returning to Jerusalem, his followers are "continually in the temple blessing God" (v. 53), causing Luke's Gospel to both begin and end with prayer and worship.

Jesus has told his disciples to wait for the spirit – to trust this promise – but they don't just sit around waiting – they worship. I wonder how different masterchef or even election results would be if in the time of waiting we worshiped. This is not a flippant thing for filling in time, it is an active celebration of God in our midst which informs what is taking place and what it to come.

Luke concludes his gospel with Jesus giving guidance to how his followers are to live: worshiping God, waiting on Jesus' promises, and doing so "with great joy". Later writers and followers will build on this, including the writer to the letter to the Ephesians we heard earlier – they build on the theme of ascension as a call for the church to "know" God's power as it is revealed in Christ. This Christ who is above all things is also the head of the church, which is his body (vv. 22-23)<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2463](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2463)

Liturgically this week we sit between the ascension and the promise of the spirit which will come at Pentecost. It is a time of the churches year which calls us to pray – to worship in our waiting. The London Bishop's have called the whole church to pray this week initially this week, with special prayer events in the lead up to Pentecost. It is part of a national call to a week of prayer leading up to the celebration of Pentecost. It builds on our commitment as part of Capital Vision to 'Pray without ceasing.' This is the challenge to each of us: to pray for seven people.

Now the spirit of God is always praying within us whether we are aware or not, but this is a time to focus in on that spirit of prayer and yearning. On Friday night I hope some of you will join me in Wembley for the Brent Pentecost event when we will be part of this broader prayer. There are a number of resources too, including a number of events in the city listed on the Diocese website. But however you hear this message, we are invited in this time of waiting to pray and worship – wherever we are, reminded that we know the story, we know the promise and now it is time to act.

I started by asking **When does one thing become another during a transformation process?** I guess I want to ponder whether the transformation process ever ends. We are evidence of that – no sooner do we become one thing, or master a skill than we begin the process of further learning and changing. Alternatively maybe transformation occurs when we can worship within it? I think Luke's Jesus makes it clear that however we view transformation, the answer to the "**what do we do while we are waiting?**" – is worship!

Worship which is honest, which bears our soul, which acknowledges our laments, our anxieties and our questions. But most importantly worship which focuses on God, and as we are reminded by Luke – fills us with great joy!! (Luke 24:53) Amen