

The Thing About Waiting

“One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps ahead of me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk.’ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.” John 5: 5-9

Have you ever wanted to change for the better? Maybe you want to correct a bad habit or develop a good habit. Maybe you want to be more patient, thankful, or generous. Less whiney, irritated, or envious. There are many changes that would benefit us. But whatever the change, let’s say we have tried and tried with no lasting success. Should we keep hoping, trying, working, waiting for change to occur, or should we just give up and give in to the way we are?

I saw something recently that bears thought when it comes to the phenomenon of waiting. There are several of us at Sandia who volunteer doing income taxes at various sites in Albuquerque. One of the places I’ve worked in the past, as well as this year, is Barelas Senior Center in the South Valley. Barelas is a walk-in center. People start lining up outside by 7:00a.m. At 8:00a.m. sharp, the door opens and the coordinator admits, say, the first 50 in line. Everyone else in line has to come back another day or do their taxes elsewhere.

If you are among the first in line, you get your taxes done within an hour or so. If you are fortieth, you not only stand in line for up to an hour to get in the door, but you then sit from 8:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. or later, waiting to have them done.

For some time now I have thought that some of the most patient people in Albuquerque have their taxes done by volunteers at Barelas. They stand in line. They sit in a chair. They’re thankful when it’s finally their turn to settle up with Uncle Sam. But this year, the IRS changed the computer program we volunteers use to do tax returns. Not only has it taken us longer to do a return, but the program has crashed a couple of times. And people who were still waiting at 4:00p.m. had to be sent home because we didn’t have time to do their return before the center closed at 5:00.

They were not happy. They did not seem like the same patient people we have known in years past. Thus, something to mull over. It’s easier to wait for something that you know is coming than it is for something you’re not sure is going to happen. Even if you’re fiftieth in line, you can hang in there if you expect to receive service that day. But if you know that last week several went home without having their taxes done, you wonder if by 2:00 or 3:00 you ought to give up and go home too. Waiting isn’t productive.

The fellow in John 5 (above) is waiting near the pool at Bethsaida for the whirlpool effect of the water. He must have confidence that the water will heal him because he’s been there a long time, trying without success to get in. His still being at the pool at closing time gives us something else to think about. Would he have ever encountered Jesus had he not persisted in his quest to get in

the pool? The water didn't heal him, Jesus did. But would he have met Jesus had he not been waiting to take the plunge?

If it's a good change we're praying for and working toward, maybe we should never stop hoping and waiting for it to happen. *All good things come from above*, but how and when these good things arrive, including change, is less clear. Don't give up and go home. We want to be in line when God drops by. - DJ