

CALLED TO WAIT – GENESIS 18 1-15

Sandra will tell you that I am a doer – I love to get my teeth into things. I love being busy – and yet I heard God saying to me and to many slow down put life on a pause – not something I do well.

What about you?

It's interesting that this passage from Genesis opens with Abraham waiting – its day time its hot and Abraham is sitting in the entrance of the tent – doing nothing – just waiting. I wonder if he was half dozing because there isn't much to block your view and yet Abraham clearly hasn't noticed the men advancing. Instead they are already there – did they just appear? Well God is involved but we don't know.

Note that Abraham was not waiting for them – he was merely waiting. Perhaps that is the first clue to waiting. If waiting is for something to happen then it is very different to waiting just for the sake of it. If you are waiting for an end result, then the wait is of no importance.

But when you are just waiting – you are open to all sorts of possibilities – things that you wouldn't have thought about – or things that could never happen – but just do.

In the case of Abraham – out of the blue – totally unexpectedly three visitors turn up. What should he do? The obvious answer would be to say hello but let them go on their way. But in the middle of nowhere Abraham realises they cannot have arrived at his doorstep by accident.

These are no ordinary visitors – and so he invites them in. Interestingly there are three of them – one of whom is addressed as lord. We are not told which of the three – is the group the three parts of the trinity – Father, Son and Spirit – we don't know – if not then perhaps God and two angels.

Whichever it is – Abraham sees them because he is waiting – he does not see them because he has been waiting for them.

It is in the act of waiting on God – that God deems it right to approach Abraham. Note they do not seek to talk to Abraham it is he who engages with them.

Often we are ready to seek God out over a particular issue – we need an answer – we expect an answer and we effectively call God to account on the detail of our issue. Is it right to do so? My personal thought is maybe on the odd occasion but not as much as we do.

We are called instead to wait – and in the waiting God will appear to us – but not to answer our questions but to express his desire for our life.

Abraham is probably much smarter than many of us – first he has learnt just to wait, secondly he recognises when God turns up and he gives his full attention.

Not only does Abraham focus on welcoming God but he puts all his available resources at God's disposal. He goes and finds his wife Sarah who bake some bread. He selects a calf and gives it to a servant to slaughter and no doubt there is a chef on standby to cook the meat.

Do we put other things on hold when we wait for God and is our attention so focussed on him that we do not worry about other issues when we sense the presence of the Lord?

For Abraham – serving God and being in his presence is everything – nothing else matters and he gives God hospitality.

Hospitality for Jews in the Old Testament meant offering everything, their food, their finest clothes, and the best bed to the guest recognising their privilege in having a guest to stay.

And note the change of pace – from doing nothing to Abraham being fully attentive to the needs of his guests – even though his guests don't actually ask for anything.

Abraham offers refreshment – entertains them to accept and they say – “Very Well – do as you say.”

In that moment God says OK I'll go with you I'll do it your way. The lesson here is to be prepared to open ourselves up to God and give him space – of course the issue is that to be giving God time means you cannot be using time for anything else. Are you and I prepared to wait upon the Lord – either by being still or serving him by giving him our full attention.

It is only when all the preparations are done, and the food served that Abraham and God have a conversation. If prayer is one way we communicate with God how do we prepare to talk to him.

So often we are in a rush sending up an arrow prayer as we move from crisis to crises rather than taking time to pray seriously – taking time out to wait upon God to hear his invitation to talk before we rush headlong into our list of wants.

How often do we learn to wait for God to start the conversation?

And so in Genesis 18 God speaks notice “they speak” and say “Where is your wife Sarah?”

And in that statement God clearly knows and makes it clear that he understands the deepest need of both Abraham and Sarah the need for a family. There is no need for Abraham to ask – God knows.

All that time waiting was not wasted time – instead, it was well used time as God and Abraham RESTED IN EACH OTHERS PRESENCE AND God in the silence felt Abraham's real need. The need for a son and in nine months the wish was granted through Sarah.

I wonder what would happen if instead of second-guessing God we stopped and gave some time to listening to him. Would we find more of God's presence in our lives – might we discover that God is really concerned about us – might we find that God is active in our lives – looking out for us.