

A New Page



As we stand at the beginning of a new page in history, we must remember some things. There is no future without the past and the past colors the future; you cannot go back to the way things use to be; and the future is coming, ready or not. People are so full of contradictions. Many of us are not good at waiting. Like children who cannot wait to grow up, many of us are impatient whenever we have to wait for anything. This is especially true when we must allow time for process or discussion to bring solutions when handling any issues we face, whether the answers come by consensus, agreement, or compromise. For others of us, the future is everything. With this thinking, nothing that happened much further back than yesterday matters or has any bearing on tomorrow, so why remember. At the same time, especially in hard times, there are those who get caught up in selective remembering or nostalgia and think, "if only we could go back to the good old days, everything would be fine". They forget we often remember the past as we want to see it, not as it was. We pick and choose those things that meet our current needs regardless of their past or future impact on others.

There are common threads running through all these snapshots of our thinking. They are all ways we demonstrate the impatience and selfishness which can limit our ability to both learn from the past and make good choices for the future. The past can be a good teacher when we build on its lessons – even the difficult ones. We must acknowledge mistakes made and wrongs done, then make a new start by taking responsibility, making amends, and asking for and giving forgiveness as needed. We can easily imprison ourselves and blite our future if we get stuck in only trying to relive past glories or when we refuse to change the things that were hurtful and destructive in our past.

Over and over again, people have had to learn the values and dangers the past brings to the future. This reality shapes the Old Testament narrative. It is a constant refrain in our national life, though we are quite good at ignoring the fact, seeing only sinister intentions, or looking back only with rose-colored glasses. We see this too in the church and in our families. Looking back can help us find our better selves by returning to the Lord's leading, and letting go of hurts and wrongs that get in the way as we move forward. Both take work. We cannot just sit back and wait for something to change. The waiting we must do is waiting on the Lord. Such waiting is very active listening and action! It means letting go of selfish ambitions and being open to the new possibilities God has in store for us when we have ears to hear. Scripture also tells us: *those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall run and not faint* (Isaiah 40:31). As the music many of us know adds: "teach me Lord, teach me Lord, to wait!" Pray for the wisdom to both honor the past where it lifts up our calling to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8) and find a new way when it reveals our failure to do the things that make for justice and peace (Luke 19:42). Such prayers are a good way to start a new page.

This week, do not forget to pray for:

- **The leaders of this & other nations** who have big issues to address for the good of all of us
- **The COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Nigeria & other places** where violence, hunger, poverty, or all of these together are part of life
- **All places where anger & frustration** push people to violence or destruction

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