

How Jesus Transforms: Jesus Confers  
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How are you at choosing gifts? Some of you are really good... I (Tony) know! Jo Ann is awesome at this. Me?...not so much. :) My nephew and his fiancée are getting married in a couple of weeks and I'm once again clueless. It seems they already have a blender! And apparently monogrammed trash bags are not very sentimental. :) So I went to Mr. Google for advice on useful but unique gifts. Here are some that someone, somewhere, apparently actually gave to a somewhat bewildered couple: a hurricane evacuation backpack, a pink can opener with the word 'love' on it., asparagus, 24 double rolls of toilet paper (heh... recently that's become a VERY useful gift!), dental floss, a high-heeled shoe cake server, and a magnifying glass. I like the asparagus. Carol remains largely unconvinced. :)

Fortunately, God gives good gifts. Indeed, ***every gift God freely gives us is good and perfect (James 1:17 TPT)***... even though some of the gifts he confers may bewilder us a bit at first glance as well. Jesus gave his disciples at least three significant gifts after his resurrection... and those gifts are for us as well. They may not have felt to them like a gift in the moment, but each gift pointed toward transformation. They still do.

One was the Gift of Forty Days. That's how long he spent with them on earth after he rose from the dead. What they liked about it was that they got him back!... who wouldda thunk it? But he came back different... they didn't recognize him right away...and he appeared and disappeared at will, like he was on a Star Trek episode. :) He didn't stay... he said that right up front... his return was temporary but that it's temporariness was a good thing.. that he was returning to his father and their father so they could experience something even better. How much of that they understood at the time we don't know, but probably not much. Would you have? :)

But those 40 days were significant in their transformation, which is why we've spent most of our time together since Easter talking about them. The encounters that Jesus had with Mary outside the tomb, and Thomas in a closed room, and the 7 disciples fishing on the sea, and Peter by the seashore... all of these modeled for us what our own transformation can look like...which has been the main theme of this series of messages. Jesus consoled them, clarified things for them, called them, and... as we see today... conferred gifts upon them to help them live those transformed lives... and the same consolation, the same clarification, the same calling, and the same conferral is given to us as well.

And at the end of the 40 days, Jesus gave His followers a second significant gift ...The Gift of Ascension Day. When we moved to Lancaster County, I couldn't figure out why Amish businesses closed on seemingly random days in Spring. And even when I discovered the reason, it made little sense to me... they were celebrating Ascension Day... like they did this past Thursday. It wasn't until years many years later that I realized that there was a lot more going on in the Ascension than just a change in Jesus' location from earth to heaven... a lot well worth celebrating!

The Ascension is yet another part of the process of transformation the Trinity was outworking... a process of fulfillment of all that had come before... and a process that would continue on to the fulfillment of all things at the end of time.

For 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus remained with His friends on earth... gladly! They needed Him there and He loved them so much He stayed. But once they were settled into the process... Jesus got to do something He must have been longing to do for 40 days... He got to return to the Trinity. This is a tremendous mystery of Christianity... we humans can have no idea how the God who became human took that glorified human body back into the invisible, eternal Trinity. We are simply told that Jesus took his disciples somewhere out near Bethany, where ***“he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.” (Acts 1:9 NIV)***

We don't know how it happened... all we can know is that it DID happen... and that by receiving Jesus with a glorified human body, the Trinity took humanity into Themselves. The Ascension shows us the transformational power of God's love... Sin and death had separated us from God... but in Christ, God's love united us as one with the Trinity itself... separation was overcome. When Jesus was welcomed back into the Godhead, so were we. This is what Paul was talking about when he told the Ephesians: ***He raised us up with Christ the exalted One, and we ascended with him into the glorious perfection and authority of the heavenly realm, for we are NOW co-seated as one with Christ! (Eph. 2:6 TPT).*** We are NOW seated in Christ in heavenly places... this reality alone can transform our entire sense of ourselves... but, of course, there is more...

After Ascension Day, he gave them one more gift... the Gift of Ten Days. 40 days before ascension and 10 days after... but unlike those first 40 days, the Bible tells us little about the 10. Jesus himself told them little about what they were to do during that time... and he didn't even tell them how long it would last. He said, ***“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49 NIV).*** Interestingly, the word translated “stay” there literally means “be seated”. So he's saying to the disciples, in essence: “Go sit down on earth, as you are seated with me in heaven. You will be with me there and I will be with you here, because I'm sending my Spirit to you.” Pretty cool, eh? It was a cosmic sit-in. :)

He gave them nothing else to do...no strategic plan, no tasks to do, no decisions to make. They made one anyway... they appointed Matthias to replace Judas among the Twelve. He was apparently a good guy and had been following Jesus from the beginning. But we never hear of Matthias again. Other than that they just did ordinary things. The Bible says they spent time together in prayer in the Upper Room and in worship at the Temple. No doubt they made and ate meals together, and enjoyed each other's company. They waited, without knowing exactly what they were waiting for. How would they know when what Jesus had been promised had actually happened? Yet there is no indication that they were frustrated or uncomfortable in the waiting... for most of us, that is a miracle in and of itself!

It would have been for me, if I were there! I (Tony) have not been a good “wait-er” most of my life. I've relaxed a bit on that as I've gotten older and hopefully wiser. How about you? Waiting is not a strength of our entire culture. We want what we want, and we want it now. We pay extra for overnight shipping.

We want someone to answer immediately when we call or text or email. We want an appointment on Tuesday, not next month. We want a short line at the check-out. We want our internet to download faster. We want our movies on demand. We want traffic to keep moving, at least in the direction we're going. We want this virus to go away, now! And what happens when we don't get those things? We often grow frustrated or angry. Waiting can feel like such a waste of time, even a cause for anxiety.

The problem is that we get stuck in "chronos" time. Chronos is the Greek word for "clock time." It's where we get our word "chronology"... which is the marking of time. When we live in chronos time, we'll always be in a hurry, because we'll always hear the clock ticking in the background. Tick, tock, tick, tock... Think of Abraham and Sarah in the Bible... God said they would have descendants. But the calendar said they were running out of time. So they decided they had to take matters into their own hands. They decided that Abraham should have sex with a servant girl named Hagar so he could have a son...Hagar apparently had no voice in the matter. It was wrong. And God had NOT run out of time... and Sarah did get pregnant, long after chronos time had expired for her.

Maybe the disciples were not uncomfortable awaiting the Spirit because their experience of time had changed. Maybe that was another fruit of the transformational process they had already been experiencing with Jesus, as he kept demonstrating to them a different way of living... one in which anxiety is transformed into anticipation... and anticipation is itself a gift. I love how the The Passion Translation handles ***Romans 8:19--The entire universe is standing on tiptoe, yearning to see the unveiling of God's glorious sons and daughters!*** Isn't that a great image? Do you ever feel like that? Like a child standing on tiptoe at the window, waiting for a gift to be delivered? :) The disciples may have been just like that now! Waiting there in the Upper Room, they knew that much of what they... what the whole world!... had been longing for had already come! Yes, there was even more awaiting them... they were in an in-between time... like we are now. But they looked for the new gift, the more that was coming, with patience, not petulance, with hope, not hostility, and with joy, not judgement. They had been transformed, and so their waiting had also been transformed.

In what ways was their waiting transformed? Well, their hours and days didn't seem to be filled with any sense of unsatisfied yearning for something to happen so they could get on with life. They didn't seem anxious for the gift to finally show up so they could be okay. Nope, they seemed to be enjoying life during those 10 days... trusting that because of what had happened in the past... Jesus' Resurrection... what was promised for the future would surely happen... at just the right time. They were truly living... they were more than okay... their relationship to time was being transformed and in a real way, they were beginning to experience the fulfillment of Jesus' great prayer... ***Your Kingdom come, Your will be done... on earth as it is in heaven...***

Our usual experience of waiting, as Tony said earlier, can be excruciating. In many ways, we're like Captain Hook in the Peter Pan story... hunted by a crocodile who swallowed a ticking clock. The ticking of Chronos time drives us into survival mode, into merely existing in this world. So how wonderful is it that Jesus' Resurrection stopped the ticking clock... Chronos time broke open as eternity flowed into everyday human experience... this kind of "time" is called Kairos. Sure, Chronos

time is still a reality... but in every tick of the clock we live ready for the inbreaking of the Kairos moment...

How, then, do we live as Kairos people in a Chronos world? Is there a word other than “waiting” to describe this experience? Yes! Jesus used a word often translated with a word we don’t use much today: “abiding.” I think the Passion Translation gets at the heart of what Jesus meant: **“I am the sprouting vine and you’re my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless.” (John 15:5 TPT)** To abide is to live out of our union with Christ... and points us to some ways in which we, too, can experience our anxious waiting transformed into moment-by-moment abiding, much like those earliest disciples did...

First, be yourself. Don’t forget or lose yourself in the process of waiting. Anyone in danger of that right now, as you wait for the world to re-open, or your life to resume? Anyone struggling to keep your balance or even your sanity in the frustrations and limitations of the world as it is? If so, you’re not alone. And that’s why it’s so important to allow God to transform our anxious waiting into a peaceful abiding... so we don’t lose the core of who we are. In fact, this might be just the time to discover more deeply than ever before our true identity! This is the gift that Jesus gave Peter... we talked about this last week. Peter emerged from his conversation with Jesus more fully himself than he had ever been! He thought he knew, but it took an experience of being broken open to show him what and who he could become through the transforming love of his friend Jesus.

Second, be present. Be here now. Inhabit the moment. **Psalm 118:24 (TPT)** says: **This is the very day of the Lord that brings gladness and joy, filling our hearts with glee.** I love this translation... When was the last time your heart was filled with glee? :) Joy and gladness ... glee!... are some of the fruit of abiding in Christ... of living in the moment with Him... not demanding more to happen but celebrating the abundance we already have each and every day! The mercies of God are new EVERY MORNING... but how many of us rush past them trying to get something else?

“This very day” is all we have... the next breath, the next moment, are not guaranteed. Our current circumstances are ample proof of that. But what might be transformed in your life if you simply remained present from one moment to the next? Jesus said, **“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.” (Matthew 6:34 MSG)** In other words, being present now allows us to let go of past regrets and future fears... and abide in joy and gratitude for the Lord’s incredible generosity and love.

Third, be alive! You see, this invitation to abiding is not about just sitting around sucking our thumbs, bemoaning our fate, and feeling powerless. It’s not a surrender of our life... it’s not a surrender of anything but our will. It’s a leaning into life... which simply requires us to recognize that much of the way we’ve been taught to do life is actually death-dealing, not life-giving. Do you feel exhausted?... even before the lockdown? Do you feel like there’s too much resting on your shoulders? Do you feel like you’re struggling just to make it through? I do sometimes! Many others too. And in the midst of that

we hear Jesus inviting us to choose life in its fullness... a life which may seem counter-productive and counter-intuitive to what we've always believed. Henri Nouwen, whom we've quoted before in this series, said that when we are truly alive, "*We live our lives in the practice of what we do not originate and cannot anticipate.*" And that's an adventure all by itself!

And that leads to the fourth way we can learn to abide, Be trusting. This can be a challenge for so many of us. We WANT to trust God... we KNOW if we do we'll be able to rest and experience the abundant life Jesus offers us... but ACTUALLY TRUSTING Him is often easier wanted than done. We just can't seem to let God be God... at least for long... we try to be superhuman, to be God ourselves. But, like Dr. Phil says, "How's that working for you?"

When we choose to abide, we are free NOT to strive in our own strength... free to relax in trust that God IS able when we are not... that God IS working all things together for good in our lives... so we can stop forcing things and let Him do it in His perfect Kairos timing. We can trust that when a solution is needed, God will provide it. We can rest in God's unforced rhythms of grace... and let life unfold... and abide...

Also, be tenacious. Be persistent. This is actually one of the definitions of the biblical word translated into English as "abide." It means to "continue in what you have begun"... like this frog that refuses to surrender to the pelican. Don't let the circumstances of life derail you from the life God has given to you. Obviously, this requires some wisdom, because sometimes we NEED a detour...like Peter did... when we're living life in a way that's doing harm to us or others. That's where spiritual discernment comes in. But if you know that you're abiding in the life God has given you, then be tenacious in holding onto that life in Christ when the world promises an alternative or threatens to take it away from you. It's a gift you've been given, and no one can take it away from you... except you. :)

And... we can be praying. During the 10 days after Jesus' Ascension, the disciples were tenacious in prayer... ***They agreed they were in this for good, completely together in prayer, the women included. Also Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers. (Acts 1:14 MSG)*** ALL of them were in this together for good... for the long haul... they weren't concerned about what anyone thought... the old rules didn't apply in this new resurrection reality... so the men and the women prayed together, something they had never done before! And how were they praying?

Well, the word for prayer here literally means, "*wishing toward God.*" So cool! The disciples were like children, trusting that nothing is impossible with God... they were expressing their strong desires and certain hope that whatever gift was coming was good... and that they were ready to receive it whenever God was ready to give it. :) No hint of begging or anxiety here... prayer for them was an ongoing, moment-by-moment expression of gratitude and worship. And I can't begin to fathom how incredible this was for the women... they were accepted and affirmed as equals before God by their brothers... the gifts of God were for ALL the followers of Jesus... and that included the gift that was coming, that Jesus told them to pray for...

Be together. The early disciples didn't go back to their individual homes and abide alone. No, Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem together... and so...**All the disciples were gathered in one place (Acts 2:1 TPT)**. The Greek actually says that they were "together, together." They waited together, they abided together, they did life together, and they received and enjoyed together the gifts that God conferred on them. And the same can and should be true of us. We shouldn't try to do life alone... we can't!... and recognizing that is an essential part of our maturing as disciples. Sharing relationship with God and each other eternally is the point from the beginning. And the community that formed among them during these 10 days was necessary for the next movement of their transformation process... just as the community that has and is forming among us... before and now during this in-between time in our own lives... is necessary for our ongoing transformation as well.

There's one more gift Jesus gave them, and us: The Gift of Today. Every good gift we receive comes, directly or indirectly, from God. Our friends and families, including our Hosanna family... life itself... all are gifts from the God who does not change like shifting shadows... or fickle human beings who sometimes give gifts with strings attached.

As Jesus' first followers learned during these 10 days... and beyond... God is the Good Giver of good gifts. His love is not fickle or conditional. He showers gifts on us every day, not because we have earned them, but because His love overflows toward us constantly. In fact, God and His love are the greatest gifts of all... and no one can ever take them from us. If we will allow ourselves to abide in Him, we will enter into life transformed... full, abundant, and free.

So, over the next week, we are inviting you to JUST TRY IT! We included seven ways that our old experience of waiting can be transformed into abiding... and we are inviting you to become Kairos people in a Chronos world this week by engaging one of these practices each day. There is a handout on the website for you to use as a reminder.

It's a way for us to acknowledge that every thing, every one, every day is a gift from God... even in these crazy times. This week, allow yourself to see even the simplest things with child-like wonder. Remember that every day, this very day, is the Lord's, so rejoice in it... it will never come again... and is full of such goodness and possibility.

Don't rush through the days this week... don't fear the ticking clock... even on bad days, there are unspeakable gifts, if we will open our eyes and our hearts: the beauty of the flowers... the chirping of the birds... the laughter of children... the gift of our next breath...

We're going to close the service with a song by Matthew West called "The Beautiful Things We Miss." It can be our theme song this week... an invitation to abide in Christ... to live awake and alive every moment... as our lives are being utterly transformed ... as the chorus says:

*I don't wanna miss it  
I don't wanna look back someday and find  
Everything that really mattered  
Was right in front of me this whole time*

*Open up my eyes, Lord  
Keep me in the moment just like this  
Before the beautiful things we love  
Become the beautiful things we miss*

**Matthew West, "The Beautiful Things We Miss."**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_m0BBQSd34](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_m0BBQSd34)