

During my wanderings into rabbit holes in preparation for today's sermon I came across a poet and blogger named John Roedel. He imagines conversations with God like this:

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello My love.

Me: It's not even noon and I've already fallen to pieces.

God: That's totally fine. It makes you look like a mosaic.

Me: I just wish my life was more put together.

God: I don't.

Me: Why not?

God: Because I like puzzles. I can help you if you'd like?

Me: That would be great. Here is the cover of my puzzle box. We can use the picture as a guide to show us how my life is supposed to look like.

God: Oh, we won't need it. Your puzzle isn't ever going to look anything like that picture.

Me: Really? Ugh.

God: Sorry. Your life doesn't have the puzzle pieces to make a picture like that.

Me: Fine. What's next? Should we find all of the edge pieces of my puzzle so we can build it's frame?

God: Actually, we are going to throw out all of the edges and border pieces. You won't need them.

Me: How will we know where my boundaries are?

God: You don't have any. Your life has infinite possibilities.

Me: I don't understand. Without any boundaries I won't know which way to build.

God: Exactly.

Me: What? How do I know when I'm done putting myself together?

God: There is no "done" - your puzzle won't ever be finished.

Me: That's discouraging.

Let's pause the conversation here. Haven't we all felt like this? Life like an unfinished puzzle, perhaps with missing pieces. Or like riding a roller coaster, not sure where the next slow ascent or hurtling descent will take us. When at least every week, day, or hour we may have a mountaintop high one moment only to be staring down into a fearful or suffering valley the next.

I can imagine the apostles often felt this whiplash. Just in today's lesson they witnessed Jesus's ascension last Thursday—well, 2300 yrs ago on Thursday—literally on the top of the mountain—roller coaster. They may have thought their puzzle pieces were coming together. They had been on a high for forty days since Jesus's resurrection. Perhaps they were momentarily in shock seeing Jesus disappear again, a sense of wonder certainly, but then, those angels telling them to stop gaping up into the sky and move on down home. I bet they came down off the Mt. of Olives into that roller coaster dip confused and anxious, maybe a bit fearful.

So, they return to the house in Jerusalem to wait as we wait now, the ten days between the ascension and Pentecost next Sunday. Theirs was possibly a bustling house, hosting more people than intended, apostles, other followers, women and perhaps even some children. Sounds everywhere of voices, dishes clattering, footsteps, furniture scraping on floors. Odors of food, sweat, chamber pots, the occasional animal scampering though. This was active waiting, not only ten days of silent prayers on knees in pristine conditions.

For over 2-1/2 years they had been in a semi bubble with Jesus, walking with him, learning from him, absorbing his commands and the Way of life he preached. To be sure those years had been a roller coaster too, mountaintop times of amazing miracles and enthusiastic crowds interrupted by clashes with civic and religious authorities, culminating with the ultimate roller coaster of Holy Week events. But

through it all they learned; their faith grew; they came to believe that Jesus was truly the Son of God. They began practicing the way of life he exemplified; they developed confidence and trust.

The gospel today tells us what Jesus thought of his friends and proteges at the end of his mission on earth. At the last supper he's saying a final prayer to God, his father, for the apostles. He's entrusted them with the message he was commissioned to give and they believe; their lives now (most of the time) pattern after Jesus's. He also prays for God's protection for them because soon he won't be in human form to physically guide and help them. To paraphrase v. 11: "Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life that you conferred as a gift through me, so they can be one heart and mind as we are one heart and mind." Jesus had faith and trust in his Father that the apostles were up to the task ahead of them. They were ready...with the Holy Spirit's help that comes upon them on Pentecost.

Jesus's prayer sustained his followers through the horrors of Good Friday, strengthened their belief in the resurrection, and bolstered their faith in the waiting in that house for those ten days before Pentecost. Their active waiting is an example for us when we are forced to slow down in uncertain times. They were mostly in community, consisting possibly of individual and group prayers, communal meals sharing laughter, tears, ecstatic joys and whispered fears. They may not have understood then how the Holy Spirit would help them, but faithfully they waited in prayer together...and they were ready at Pentecost to begin spreading Jesus's message from out of their small bubble into the whole world.

We last left our conversation above with God's saying our earthly life puzzle will never be finished; we won't be done putting ourselves together. While we think that's discouraging God says:

God: I think it's exciting!

Me: But, I wanted my life to look like the person on the cover of the puzzle box. That is how it is supposed to look.

God: Nobody's looks like that. Everybody is constantly shuffling their pieces together. Have patience. Sometimes you have to trust and wait. Nobody is ever finished. It's the joyful work of a lifetime.

Me: Umm. My pieces won't even fit together. There are hardly any matches. How am I going to get this thing to stay together with all of these jagged pieces?

God: That's where I come in. I'm the glue. My Holy Spirit can be a guide and help along the Way to comfort you when it's confusing or hard to juggle the pieces.

Me: This is going to get really messy.

God: I can't wait!

Me: We are going to need a bigger table.

Jesus said that he and God, his father, were one, and he and his followers who believed were of one heart. Today Jesus and we who believe are of one heart.

We are all connected in God, through Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We trust God to keep most of our puzzle pieces at least on the table, not lost or damaged. We praise God on those mountaintop coaster highs and pray for comfort and help in the fears and sufferings of the low valleys.

Like the apostles during those first ten days, over time, we know that there is strength & courage in the anticipation of the waiting room. Each time we are again ready to spread Jesus's message of Love into the world.

We continually expand the table for ourselves and others. So many puzzle pieces. The divine spark within each of us connects my pieces to yours

connects yours to your neighbors'

connects your neighbors' pieces to families'

connects families' pieces to loving communities'

connects all of us to...God.

