
Living in a Place of Readiness

A sermon by CanonCarolynne Williams
Proper 27 – Year A

Many years ago, I was responsible for the immediate preparedness and readiness of 106 flight attendants based here in Atlanta. The city of Atlanta is the location of Delta Airlines headquarters. Their readiness included everything that was connected to them and them fulfilling their responsibilities as it pertained to the safety of the traveling public any time that they were a part of a crew.

In addition to the 106, there were a couple of hundred who, while transiting through the ATL airport base each day, would wait until they arrived in Atlanta to ask questions about policies and procedures or were seeking clarification in regard to a particular matter. This steady stream of flight attendants was constant. Sometimes, the flight attendant did not agree with or did not like the answer that had been given to them by their own supervisor/manager in their home base.

One of the 106, of whom I will call John, was excellent in everything that he did. I was his supervisor for years. I never concerned myself with him or his record. He lived and breathed being prepared and was always in a state of readiness, because he was prepared.

If John was the purser of the crew, as they are called these days on the larger aircraft, or the flight attendant in charge, the other cabin crew members knew that it would be a seamless trip, regardless of what may have happened. John hailed from North Georgia living in the mountains and was the person of excellence that we all strive to become.

He was meticulous in everything he did that related to his profession and everything that came across my computer or paper across my desk, with his name attached, was without question.

On this particular day, John was reporting to the airport to fly his three day trip. He appeared at my office door, which was unusual.

He had picked up his uniform from the dry cleaners on his way to the airport.

Upon preparing to change into his uniform at the airport, he removed the cleaners' bag and realized the trousers were not there. A beautiful uniform complete with wings, service pins, reflecting the number of years of service given, but no trousers.

Now, this was truly back in the day, so there were no spare uniform pieces or parts. Policy was very strict and there was no room for deviation. He was not prepared nor in a state of readiness. His flight left without him. The aircraft was boarded, the aircraft door closed and sealed, and John was not on the aircraft. His flight left without him because I had to suspend him.

This took money out of John's pocket.

I have not seen John in years. I have heard that he is doing quite well.

I have always remembered this simple story and so has John. He was dependent upon another being able to supply something ordinary and they failed. His being prepared and his state of readiness was affected.

The aircraft door closed without him being on board.

As it reads in our lesson from Matthew: ten bridesmaids at a wedding. Five were prepared and five were not. The question becomes. were they not prepared?

They all had resources to be prepared before they went to sleep.

They each had several opportunities to prepare themselves for being able to enter the doors of the church and join in the gathering of those who had come to celebrate and enjoy the party.

They were all dressed and had their lamps with them, but had not taken the time to be completely prepared for any deviation of the time of the arrival of the groom.

The groom did not come when expected. When the groom, the Christ, came, the joy and honor and glory was abundant. Those who were not completely prepared were not able to enter when the bridegroom arrived, even though they knew that he was coming. They tried to borrow from those who were completely prepared. But, it was not the responsibility of the five who were prepared to care for those five who were not prepared.

There are responsibilities for all which can be accounted for only through an individual relationship with God.

I believe that the second coming of Christ is continuous. Christ is continually coming to us.

The mystery of the presence comes to others in the faces of others.

The mystery of the presence of God comes to us through children and the young folk.

It comes through the unchurched and the pious. The mystery is captured in the beauty and holiness of life and through death and then life eternally.

Thomas Keating, in writing about liturgy, says this:

*Christian spirituality and theology cannot be separated.
God has joined them together in an indissoluble bond.
The liturgy enshrines and manifests this vital unity.
It is designed above all to transmit "the mind of Christ."
The consciousness that Jesus manifested of the ultimate reality as "Abba".
The God of infinite compassion.*

"Abba" is at one and the same time, totally transcendent and totally concerned about the human condition. When those who participate in the liturgy are disposed by adequate preparation and understanding, this experience of God, in ever increasing degrees, is transmitted." *The Mystery of Christ* (Page 1)

We, just as we are, are to live in a place of readiness. Readiness indicates being at the point. Being prepared, being ready. It means everything, all systems have been tested, all indications are in place and are committed.

Once one commits, one is prepared and in a state of readiness. Thus we have the opportunity yet again to prepare. We are given the opportunity to begin again. We are given opportunities to forgive those who have sinned against us and we are saved ourselves from the time of trial and are delivered from evil.

When we reflect upon our spiritual lives and its highlights, the question for many may be: have I done all that I can do for the Church? For God? Have I done all that I can do in building my relationship with God?

From a practical place the questions may become.

Have I completed my giving as I pledged to do? Am I fast approaching the closing of my books in my giving of time and talent for this parish year? Have I completed my turn of volunteering for this church year?

When intentional focus is given to assessment, we are determined if we have reached the goals we have set for ourselves

during this season of Pentecost.

As the next couple of three weeks come and leave we will turn our attention toward giving Thanksgiving. Not only for ourselves, but for those who are alone and all who are moving forward.

We will give thanks for all of the blessings of this life. We will also recall that 44 people who were homeless died on the streets of Atlanta last year, whereas 67 people died on the streets of Atlanta this year. Without shelter. All of them were honored with a service of dignity and remembrance from this parish as you have done for the past 26 years. Their names were called. A few of you would refer to that service as having their name written in the "Book of Life."

Are we prepared? Have we filled our lamps with a readiness to respond to the call upon our lives as Christians?

In our efforts to be prepared and live in a state of readiness, let us kneel at the foot of the cross, let us stand and worship him. We worship God for eternity. And for our claim to be with God, only God's mercy will endureth forever. Nothing else. Let us worship the Lord our God. God is worthy to be praised.

Remember, we are all God's children. Even John, in the midst of his perfection.