

Genesis 28:10-19  
Romans 8:12-25  
July 19, 2026

## Expectation

Driving home from Denver took almost two full days. I struck out across the east Colorado plains last Sunday after church expecting it would be a couple of hours before the long stretch of Kansas that lay before me. On the high plains the towns stand out more than in any other place because they seem to sit at the top of a hill.

In reality, they *do* sit on top of a hill. The rise from Kansas City to Denver is more than four thousand feet over a stretch of about six hundred miles. Most of it seems imperceptible, over ground that often seems inhospitable to trees, let alone people, the wind always blowing.

It took almost three hours to get to Kansas, 180 miles, the last hour seemed never-ending. I kept thinking it must be near, only to be met with dozens of miles yet to go and towns on the horizon that turned out to be Colorado towns. It is funny how waiting through Kansas was easier because I expected it to be long.

Waiting is hard, one of the hardest of all human tasks. Honesty compels us to confess that we are too impatient to be any good at it, especially when it outlasts expectation. I remember as a high school runner that if I told myself I was going to run six miles, I could run six miles; and if I told myself I was going to run ten miles, I could run ten miles; but if I told myself I

was going to run six miles, ten miles became nearly impossible, and seemed like it took forever.

The biblical story involves such waiting, “those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint.”

The promise to Abraham that he would be the Father of a great nation involved lifetimes of waiting, as his son and grandsons and great-grandsons and long distant descendants waited all their lifetimes and beyond, before anything at all like a nation emerged.

The account of Jacob at Bethel bears out this truth. The story is familiar. After having cheated his brother Esau out of a birthright, and clandestinely stolen his blessing, Jacob was forced to flee his home to avoid Esau’s wrath, he found himself camping out at night in a wilderness with a stone for a pillow.

There was a beautiful dream with a ladder into heaven and angels ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord himself restating the promise that had been given to his grandfather Abraham. Before leaving, he made an altar because he had experienced God’s presence in that lonely place. It would be decades before he could return home.

It turns out the distance, if not the terrain from Beersheba in southern Canaan to Haran is not all that different from the distance between Denver and Kansas City. Depending on the route taken, it could be

five hundred to seven hundred miles, at fifteen to twenty miles a day it would take about six weeks to make the trip.

The story tells us that God meets us along the way in the most unlikely places at crucial times, and in surprising and sometimes delightful ways. The encounter transformed a lonely and dangerous journey into a life-changing experience of the divine.

The wilderness is not, as it may seem, a godforsaken place, nor is it a place to escape the divine claim on our lives. Sometimes domestic tranquility does more to separate us from God than the long escape from the wrath of a brother. The wilderness journey *can* be a place of finding and being found by God.

One of the spiritual disciplines is, “*waiting*,” but not just waiting, but *waiting with expectation*.

In the epistle reading, we find Paul encouraging *the long wait*. He offers some of the most powerful words in the bible to encourage us in our longing for the world to come.

He tells us that by grace we are God’s children; that we share in Christ’s suffering in order to share also in Christ’s glory; that, in one of the most remarkable statements in all scripture, “all our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory about to be revealed in us.”

He speaks of Creation as subjected to futility in hope, and uses the metaphor of childbirth as the circumstance of its waiting. It is not an end that awaits us, but a beginning. We groan inwardly and wait eagerly for our Redemption, and live in the mystery of this hope, about which he writes;

“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” Expectantly.

I consider myself to be a non-creedal baptist, meaning that adherence to a formal statement of belief should not be thought of as a requirement for salvation, or a position in the church, or a job.

On the other hand when freely given an opportunity, and spoken voluntarily, a creed can bring simple clarity and help us understand what we believe, say out loud how we understand our lives in the world under God, a little better about that for which we wait.

Last Sunday I found myself in a church that recited together the Nicene Creed, and was moved by that simplicity, and by saying together with all those other people:

“We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and  
the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and  
glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of  
sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, *and the*

*life of the world to come. Amen.*

Sooner or later, people were bound to give words to  
the meaning of their experience of life in Christ. Rightly  
taken, that is what these words are.

All of the other kinds of waiting in life are mere  
shadows of the expectation of the Kingdom that has  
no end, the judgment in glory of the living and the  
dead, and the life of the world to come.

Seen in this way, we are steadied, in this wobbly  
world, in the give and sway of life; when life surprises  
us, or disappoints us, when expectation delays, or  
outlasts our patience; and we are strengthened for  
whatever comes, in the full assurance of this  
destination.

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