

11-06-16 "How About Those Cubs?" A Reflection on 2 Thess. 2:1-5,13-17 for All Saint's Sunday, by Mark Arbisi, Christ Church, KBK

How about those Cubs? They did it. They won their first World Series Championship since 1908. It only took 108 years, only. Still, how remarkable is that? All the more remarkable actually since it took 108 years. By no means has it been easy to be a Cubs fan. Over more than a century they have modeled a special type of patience. My paternal grandfather was one of them. As a very young boy I remember him taking my cousin and myself to Wrigley Field—for my first and I believe only Cubs game—I didn't have a clue what was going on but it was enough for me to see how excited my grandfather was to be there.

Unprecedented in the annals of sports history, Cubs fans waited and waited and waited for the victory that seemed ever out of their reach, always illusive—a dream, never a reality. Yet hope reigns eternal; and what was so illusionary for so long eventually proved not to be. Maybe it simply had to take the time it took...like, good things can't be rushed, like good things are worth waiting for, like good things are worth striving for despite the heartbreak, despite endless set backs, despite a lurking sense of impossibility--of odds seemingly forever being stacked against you. But then, as scripture informs our hearts: "*for everything there is a season*" including even a season for a Cubs victory after 108 years (the author of Ecclesiastes never envisioned that one I'm sure). Yes indeed it is the Cubs season. BTW: Do you know that a baseball is sewn together with 108 stitches? Clearly this 108th year was Chicago's year. It had to be. One doesn't have to be a Cubs fan to enter into their joy and from it receive immeasurable encouragement to continue whatever goal one has set before one self. From this day forward, when we're tired, when we're discouraged, when we feeling like giving up, we can look to the Cubs 2016 victory for that indefeasible shot in the arm. Besides what a truly blessed diversion from these truly godawful waning days of this shameless election year. Indeed, how about those Cubs!

It strikes me that on this our All Saint's Sunday the Cubs victory blesses us with an invaluable reminder of the nature of our Christian faith and vocation. *We—the saints*--are the people who stay the course; we wait and wait and wait through the long, long wait for the Victory; for the very redemption, the healing and the setting right, finally, of God's glorious creation according to God's glorious will and purposes. This being what we—Jesus' intimate friends live for, what we endeavor for, what we sacrifice for, what we hope and pray for, eventually die for; understood yes, as the Kingdom come to earth; as yes, Christ's return, or simply as the realization of a world ordered finally and fully by peace and justice and equality among neighbors, peoples, religions, nations (need I add, among politicians?). Such hope defines all the saints.

However we envision this Victory, by whatever name employed to speak of it, in the end it doesn't matter. What matters is that we believe in God's Victory with all our heart, soul, spirit and mind; what matters is that we keep faith despite seeming impossible odds and circumstances. What matters is that we never growing weary, or succumbing to despair, or embrace weak resignation to the things we live, hope and pray for, the things of highest importance. As our epistle author reminds us this morning, *For this purpose [God] called you, brothers and sisters...stand firm, hold fast to the traditions that you were taught...[remembering too that you have been blessed as God's beloved as] the first fruits for salvation through...the Spirit.*" That's us—you and I. Even living as we are this side of the full Victory of God, acknowledging our identity in Christ alone—yes, our place among the saints—is itself more than ample reason for a full blown celebration. We are Christ's own; we are Christ's saints.

As we who travel this way fully realize, our high and holy calling demands much from us. It is not for the faint of heart. Never has been. To the community of faith in Thessalonian our author addresses saints of a somewhat different stripe. Sadly, they have largely lost their way; largely they have lost track of who and whose they are; largely they have grown frustrated and complacent, resigned and just plain tired of their work and their wait, of being true friends of Jesus.. Why bother with it all, giving one's life to Jesus, they wondered? The World Series title will never be theirs. So why endeavor so against the world to feed the hungry, to house the homeless, to struggle against the powers and the principalities of government, of empire—when the world just goes on seemingly spinning further into the ditch. All their good intentions seemed so puny, their prayers so ineffectual...their hopes, the longest of long shots. Why not merely stop, merely turn things over to God? When Jesus comes back, they thought, surely he'll straighten everything out for everybody, for the good, on that final day...so let's not endeavor to heard. Why bother?

Granted, such fatalism may be alien to those of us whose lives have been fully given over to the goodness and graciousness of God. Fatalism in response to all that God offers and inspires us to become may baffle and befuddle some of us church folk who defiantly do stay the course. To use who are daily engaged such a community may sound like fiction, but it is not. I kid you not. There are churches who have given up. Obviously, under God's grace there is room for all kinds, including the lost, the weary and the resigned. Yet, our author, in the manner of the Christ before him, reaches out to stir them from their complacency and to ignite their spirits. Yes, our author knows it is so easy to give up on one's identity in Christ, so easy to drop out of the household of faith. So he reaches out to them, he begs them, even as he blesses them, to *"not be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed."* He speaks the Word of God anyway. Some will hear it—and their lives transformed for good, making their wait that much more of a celebration—while others will not.

All who have Christ alive in their hearts know well the temptations to abandon faith because they have defeated said temptations; all who have Christ alive in their hearts, those truly animated, truly inspired, truly compelled by God's love and grace have claimed the moral high-ground—that which is objectively noble, that which even exists independently from our faith. And when God seems distant it is that to which they cling.

So, how about those Cubs?

How about our saints living in glory?

How about us, the persistent saints living this very moment who keep on keeping on keeping despite the odds, all for goodness's sake?

Indeed: *"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us through grace, gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort [our] hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word."*

Praise be to God and Amen