



A REFLECTION FROM BAPTIST UNION PRESIDENT GEOFF COLMER

TODAY, YOU MIGHT WANT TO REFLECT ON THE WAITING IN YOUR LIFE

As a former professional musician, music continues to be one of the great loves of my life. And I'm fascinated by how music can be informative for our Christian faith. Let me give you an example.

Music, or certainly most Western tonal music, works on the principle of ETR; that is, *equilibrium, tension and resolution*. Music starts from a place of equilibrium, from which tension is created, and then the tension is resolved.

How composers manage the resolution of tension is what music is all about. Take a piece of music such as 'Humpty Dumpty' and hear it in your head.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall – you're still more or less at home.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall – you're at a point of tension and definitely away from home.

All the King's horses and all the King's men – the tension is intensified.

Couldn't put Humpty together again – then comes resolution and you're back home again.

I could provide countless others examples: Beethoven's *Für Elise*, or the theme from *Schindler's List*; the slow movement of

Brahms' 2nd Symphony; or if you've got five hours to spare, there's Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*!

Great composers and songwriters use tension to generate expectations, which are deliberately delayed through the diversions and digressions that the music takes. The effect this ETR has is to give music a forward momentum. Western music is directional, it goes somewhere; it drives towards rest and closure. It draws the listener in by pulling us forward. As we listen to music we wait for the next sound. It means music is inherently hopeful, drawing us into a pattern of hopefulness. We can also say that music takes time - to rush it is to ruin it; you can't just fast forward it. Music takes place in time, and it takes time.

How does this inform our faith? Often we meet people in the Bible who are in a state of tension, neither a place of equilibrium nor of resolution. They are not at home. They are not at rest. They are in a situation of waiting.

Abraham and Sarah waited. Jacob and Rachel waited. The prophets waited. Zechariah waited. Elizabeth waited. John the Baptist waited. Mary waited. Simeon waited. Anna waited.

Waiting continues to be part of the story of God. For much of the time, if ever, God does not seem to be in a hurry!

And in our own situations, we so often have to wait. We have had to wait for so much in the last two years. Beyond the pandemic there are many occasions when we continue to wait. We might be relatively unanxious about some kinds of waiting, but it's still a state of tension. And on some occasions, that tension will feel very intense and undesirable.

The fact is, God is not at our beck and call. We cannot force God to follow our schedule. We are not in control. But we can keep ready for God: our God who is always present, and has a habit of breaking in, in fresh

ways. This is what faith comes down to: waiting with readiness. With hope. It has been said that waiting is never a movement from nothing to something; it's always a movement from something, to something more.

The Psalmist says *"I wait for the Lord, and in his word, I hope"* (Psalm 130:5).

Today, you might want to reflect on the waiting in your life.

What are you waiting for?

What is this like for you?

Where is God in the waiting?

How is God with you? Today, and these moments?

What might you glean from reflecting on the stories of Zechariah, of Anna, of Elizabeth, of John the Baptist – who all had to wait?

**I WAIT FOR THE LORD,
AND IN HIS WORD, I HOPE
(PSALM 130:5)**



Geoffrey Colmer has been a Baptist Minister since 1990. In what seems like a former life, Geoff was a professional musician playing bassoon in the English Northern Philharmonia, the orchestra of Opera North. After ministerial training at Spurgeon's Theological College, he served at churches in Rye and Melton Mowbray before coming to the post of Regional Minister and Team Leader in the Central Baptist Association in July 2004. He is Baptist Union President 2021-22.

