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Romans 8:12-25
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One Suffering Body

Good morning beloved church family.

Today is a sermon about “What time is it” Far in the past were the days of humanity’s youth when we knew nothing. We have grown in our wisdom, but are we wise yet? Jesus has shown us a new way to live, but are we practicing it? Have we arrived, will we arrive? Are we somewhere in the middle of those two concepts? Are we arriving here, but not yet?

Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you. Our destination and road. Amen.

What does it take to become a follower of Christ anyway?

Does one become Christian once you believe the right things or start doing the right things? Like a singular event, like once you’re baptized or confirmed you? Is it some kind of process? Like learning how to ride a bike. Or some combination of both, where we make a choice but will continue to learn deeper what that means.

When have we become the Christian community?

Do we have to be of one mind? Do we have to be perfect? Or is it enough that we are in the process of becoming? Heading towards a goal, even if we come up short or cannot always agree on the right step forward. What I am asking is, have we arrived at the Christian community we desire, something Jesus calls the kingdom of God, or is the kingdom still far off?

Have we become, or are we becoming? What time are we in this process?

That is the question that I imagine the community in Rome is asking Paul. The Church in Rome is worried about the future. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is here, but they cannot see it. From what Paul says, they were promised freedom and that their lives would get better once they became Christian; however, their neighbors looked down on them, and they feared persecution. They want to change the world and make it a better place for themselves and their children, but all their work seems futile.

So Paul gives them an image of labor pains. The future is here, but not yet, and hard work and suffering are before us before we can get there. Worst still, we are Christ's siblings who are meant to take up Christ's work. So have we arrived? Yes, we have arrived at the fruit farm of God, the fruit is ripe, but we still have to pick it, pack it, and get it to market.

When I read this promise, I know that God has prepared a place for me at the table. I do not need to be perfect, and I should not expect perfection in myself, my fellow siblings in Christ, or the world. God will not magically make everything better at my baptism or fix all the problems in myself or the world. What I am asked to do is be a midwife of creation, working to bring something new and beautiful into the world.