

The readings of this morning describe the faithful as people who set out for new places, anticipate new arrivals, wait for big changes, and search for new homelands. In these readings, the faithful are nomads. They wander. They contend with a holy restlessness. They straddle the hyphen. They work for the transformation of this world even as they yearn with all their hearts for another.

Faith as it is described in Scripture is not, in other words, a destination. It's not a conclusion or a form of closure. Faith is a longing. Faith is a hunger. Faith is a desire. According to Jesus's parable of the diligent servants, faith is a posture of active, engaged alertness.

It is the rightly aligned heart, the dressed-for-action body, the lit lamp on a dark night.

It is the humble willingness to steward a house we don't possess until its rightful owner comes home.

It is the patient ability to wait on a Presence that has not yet arrived, a promise that has not yet been fulfilled.

It is an overwhelming desire to welcome, serve, and nourish Jesus - whenever and however he makes an appearance.

It is the daily business of living on our tiptoes, our eyes on the door, our hands ready at the doorhandle for the Master's joy-filled arrival.

By these definitions, the opposite of faith is not doubt.

The opposite of faith is complacency, apathy, resignation, and cynicism.

The opposite of faith is falling asleep. It's pie-in-the-sky, a disengaged acceptance of the status quo, a refusal to embrace holy restlessness as an incentive to work for a more just and loving world here and now.

The opposite of faith is accepting anything less than the kingdom God wishes to give us. It's hanging back and holding still when the call of God on our lives is to move.

God loves the traveller, the wanderer, the foreigner, the exile.

Those who embrace in-betweenness can serve as vital, living metaphors for the life of faith - contemporary parables for the Church's growth and edification.

Those who don't belong are the closest to the heart and mission of God.

The holy restlessness we feel as people of faith comes from God's restless love and desire for us.

George Herbert says this beautifully in his poem *The Pulley*, and I would like to share this with you.

## **The Pulley**

When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can.  
Let the world's riches, which disperséd lie,  
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honor, pleasure.  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should," said he,  
"Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with repining restlessness.  
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast."

George Herbert - 1593-1633

The home we strain towards is the same home God is preparing for us right now,  
because it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.  
All we have to do is journey towards it.  
All we have to do is welcome it by faith.  
And we will rest in the God of nature.

*Wendy*