

# Sermon Starter – Watching and Waiting

*Psalm 146:5-10; Luke 1:47-55; Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11*

“O my dear friend, I should never have thought that parting should come so hard to me as it does. True the imprisonment seemed hard to me; but that was because they were so tyrannical; but now the parting is the hardest of all.”

—Maeyken Wens (1573, writing to her husband from prison upon receiving a death sentence for her Anabaptist faith)

The compelling frailty of Maeyken Wens’ courage, and John the Baptist’s prison musings about whether Jesus is the one, reminds us that the heroes of the faith are human like us and sometime have feet of clay.

Jesus’ reply to John’s disciples invites them to embrace the Messianic moment. He points to the signs of the times, listing spectacular healing and good news being brought to the poor. But conspicuous in its absence is any mention of a forthcoming release of captives, something John certainly had a personal stake in. By implication Jesus invites John, his disciples and us to be patient as we watch and wait for the Messianic age to unfold. What lessons await us as we watch and wait? And how might our witness add to the hope of a kingdom yet to come where love and peace, justice and mercy are companions in bringing hope, healing, and life equally to all?

Maeyken Wens, like John the Baptist, learned something of patience in affliction. The power of her witness, and of the witness of many martyrs, was magnified by the mingling of her humanity, frailty, and integrity in faith. Maeyken would later write to her children just before her execution, “Adieu, my dear children, all of you ... The Lord takes away all fear; I did not know what to do for joy, when I was sentenced.” Her letters and Jesus’ words to John the Baptist outline a simple formula for us: patience rests on hope, hope infuses courage, and courage deepens faith that the promises of God will one day be fulfilled.

How are the struggles before us increasing our patience, our willingness to wait in hope for the promises of God that will one day be fulfilled?

From Leader, Fall 2010. ©2010 MennoMedia.