

Finding rest (Hebrews 10:11-25)

Even as we seek practical solutions to our problems, we cannot afford to abandon the beliefs and spiritual practices that undergird us.

by [T. Denise Anderson](#)

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Poet Nayyirah Waheed writes these words: “all the women. / in me. / are tired.” This is one of those quotes that lives rent-free in my head. I’m not sure how Waheed was able to succinctly and pointedly capture a sensation I’ve had for years now: the feeling that everything and everyone we try to be are simultaneously exhausted. Every mask or hat we wear feels heavy on our heads or against our faces.

I have felt this so palpably since at least the onset of the pandemic, and I find that many others have as well. The additional layer to this feeling is that of being a Black woman in the United States and serving in ministry in a predominantly White denomination that, despite its large number of ordained women and non-binary folks, still struggles to achieve gender parity in pay and professional opportunities. Between code-switching and navigating capricious social rules, it’s easy to feel like each room I enter warrants a different presentation, a different person. And the grand irony is that having to do this is incredibly dehumanizing.

Part of the heaviness I’ve been feeling is rooted in deep concern for the direction of our nation and the world, especially as Christian Nationalism has seemed to take deeper root. Christian progressives are quite adept at naming these realities and intellectualizing them. But, precisely because I think Christian progressives

understand these things so well, it can be too easy to give into despair when you know how serious things are. But even as we seek practical solutions to our problems, we cannot afford to abandon the beliefs and spiritual practices that undergird us.

The writer of Hebrews was a master exhorter and effectively reminds readers of their faith, their teachings, and, by extension, their power. This discourse on Jesus' priesthood is important to the community of disciples because it reminds them (and us) that, though we may be on the frontlines of the struggle, there is a buffer between us and that which seeks our destruction. The word priest—*iereus*—literally means one who stands in between as an intermediary. Jesus now serves that role for us as both our connector to God and our protection from the impact of sin. The writer of Hebrews wants the community to remember we have a line of defense in Christ Jesus.

There is something liberating in that realization. For me, it helps me find rest when everyone I need to be is tired. I am not alone. We are not alone.

I don't expect that I will immediately need to shed all the personas I possess. But, at least for now, maybe it's time to take off the cape.