

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 15, 2019
3rd Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 35:1-10, Matthew 11:2-11
Hymns: 55; 69; 62; 127:4-5

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: James 5:7-11

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

⁹Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

¹¹Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Waiting patiently

You know there are times when waiting patiently is not so hard. But then at other times it gets a little more difficult. I'm not talking about those times when we are late, most often because we started late, and then we get behind somebody that is driving down the street insanely slow making us late for work, or our appointment. I'm talking about the times when we are really anticipating something exciting, something great and we wish that we could hurry it along. The going to the ball game or the great vacation trip, or, for the child within or among us, the opening of the Christmas gifts under the tree. "Do not open until Christmas" is well understood, but then we can't wait, but we have no choice, we have to wait! You may look at the outward wrapping, you may try to investigate by picking it up, feeling its weight, shaking the box, but at best you may have only a vague idea of what you will see and own when the gift is finally opened.

Patient anticipation of great things to come! That is what the Spirit would encourage among us.--

THEME: Patience as an Advent Virtue.

Let us begin with --

I. Patient Anticipation of Jesus' Coming.

Our text begins with a little more mature picture than gifts under the tree.

James 5:7-8 "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

James reminds us of the farmer and how he is patient; it is a patience that is learned early on. The farmer plants his seed, knowing that he will have to wait; wait for the early rains that cause the seed to germinate and the young

sprouts to grow, wait for the later rains that give the necessary moisture for the plant to bear fruits. One must wait for the heads of grain to fill out, or the gardener has to wait for the little green tomatoes to grow and ripen. So one waits, but still waits with an anticipation that has learned from experience that what comes is worth the wait, and the wait will not be too long. All in good time. For us, we know “All in **God’s** time!”

“Good things come to those who wait.” That is how the saying goes. And what good things await us as the children of God and heirs of the inheritance of light! Jesus promised us that He would come again and receive us to Himself.

Yes, it was necessary for Jesus to go that He might prepare a place for us in heaven. And there was so much grace involved in that. It all began a very few hours following those words of promise. Jesus went out to meet His betrayer and those who would take Him to the cross of Calvary. There Jesus prepared a place for us by bearing our sin, and the curse of our sin in His own body; in His body, and in His spirit, for there upon the cross He was “*smitten by God and afflicted!*” (Isaiah 53:4)

He prepared a place for us with His death and burial, going before us into the grave and defeating forever the power of the grave with His resurrection. He ascended on High that He might give gifts to men, and that as He rules the world the message of the gospel would go out to people everywhere. All this so that right here in Austin, Minnesota we poor sinners would come to know the grace of sins forgiven and the hope of everlasting life. All of this is the wonder of the Lord preparing a place for His elect as He times His Second Advent to receive us to Himself in heaven.

And what a wonder of glory that shall be. All the sufferings and disappointments and pain of sin will be gone forevermore. The glory of the Lord shall be our light,

and we shall dwell before the Lord in a new heavens and a new earth, the glory of which is beyond description beyond anything we have known in this world.

You have all that coming when Jesus returns in glory! It is going to be something, something beyond special, and that is what the Lord will bestow on **you** in His grace. But you see it will all come in His time. We need to wait in patient anticipation.

Remember that James told us to **establish our hearts** for the coming of the Lord. That means that we keep ourselves on a spiritual track that is fitting for all this grace and glory.

There is waiting, and then there is waiting. There is waiting in which you while away the time. You're stuck in a waiting room at the clinic. Maybe the doctor had an emergency to tend to, and you are stuck for an indeterminate amount of time, like waiting for the Lord's return. So what do you do? Read a book, or pull out your phone and play a few levels of Candy Crush. Too many Christians are waiting for the Lord's return in this manner. We are caught up in the frivolous pursuits of this life and fail to stay involved in the Lord's business. Go back to James example in our text, the waiting farmer. He plants and then he waits, but he doesn't just sit; he cultivates, he fertilizes, he watches for insects. He provides extra water if needed and he can. He is busy while he is waiting, tending to the tasks that pertain to the coming harvest; readying equipment, buying extra fuel, cleaning out grain bins. There is so much to do! He isn't just sitting back under the shade tree playing Candy Crush.

So the Lord has told us time and again that we are to be busy with His work, busy with the Word that He has entrusted to us. What a wonder of grace that the Lord has entrusted us with the spread of the gospel. **Establish your hearts**. Set our priorities according to this coming

event of the Lord's return. This is what life is about, not the accumulation of great wealth, or power and prestige. It is about the Lord and His coming in glory.

Now the Apostle James reminds us that in this time we also need to work on --

II. Patience with our Fellow Christian.

James 5:8-9 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

I need to repeat verse eight because we are taking it into another aspect of our Christian life. Again we need to work on patience but not only with our anticipation with the Lord's coming, but also with dealing with our fellow Christians. This is not an encouragement to leniency with sin that could easily destroy someone's faith that they lose their heavenly home. It is an encouragement to deal with one another as the Lord has dealt with us in bearing one another's weaknesses, and allowing for differences in temperament and gifts, and traditions.

It was a problem in the early church that there was envy among the people, differences in ethnic traditions, and certainly differences in temporal blessings. While the Lord encouraged generosity, and the evidence of that, especially in the congregation in Jerusalem was powerful, there would remain differences among the people that could cause hard feelings. **Love predominated.** Grumbling was not only discouraged. **It was defeated by the gospel.**

The key to this is found in establishing one's heart in the gospel. In one sense the gospel is the great equalizer. So often in this world equalizing things means bringing other people down, and more than a peg or two! It is assumed that those who are wealthy in the things of this world must be evil. The wealth makes them that way! The wealth

needs to be taken away! All that is the grumbling that undermines faith, undermines our love for the Lord and for our brother. We daren't let it take possession of our hearts, for the Lord is at hand! We need to live life as if the Lord's return is imminent, because that is exactly what He tells us!

Establish your hearts in the gospel. Then rich and poor together will realize that the earthly material blessings we enjoy are not the true and lasting treasure. They are the things that "*moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.*" (Matthew 619) Indeed among many early Christians they were deprived of these temporal things because of the persecution they endured. Establish your hearts in the gospel. The true treasures we possess we possess by faith in Christ. We know the peace of sins forgiven. We have love, that love which the Lord bestowed upon us, now also freely flowing from our hearts toward those around us, toward all those around us, believers and unbelievers.

This is so important for us in seeing that what we perceive as being great inequities, or great grievances when one sins against us, they aren't so great. The sins of other's against us, and I know feelings can be deeply hurt, well they aren't so great as our sins against the Lord who has richly and freely forgiven us all our debts. **He holds nothing against us!** As we await His coming we too shall emulate that grace in forgiving others. And as for earthly material blessings: the billionaire without the Lord is far poorer than any of us who know the Lord as our Redeemer.

It is the gospel that puts the issues of life into the proper perspective. So establish your hearts and you will be blessed with patience, even --

III. Patient Endurance, for Advent Hope Disperses Despair.

James 5:10-11 “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. ¹¹Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended* by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

Life can be difficult. We look forward to the Lord’s coming because then life’s difficulties will be finally and permanently resolved. For many Christians this is a big deal because the sufferings of this present time are pretty severe. The Lord directs our attention to the struggles of the prophets of old as our example of faith with patient endurance. Hosea had to endure the pain of an unfaithful wife. And it happened more than once, but the Lord said he should stay married to her as an example of the Lord’s forgiveness of the spiritual adultery of Israel. Ezekiel was told by the Lord that his dearly loved wife was going to die, but that he was not allowed to mourn for her. And she died. Isaiah was martyred. Jeremiah suffered much at the hands of the royal family even though he was from among the priests, and then he also was killed. Daniel was taken from home as a teen-ager and in his old age was thrown into the lions’ den, but the Lord protected him, the examples go on and on, but then there’s Job.

James specifically mentions the sufferings of Job for us to ponder. He lost so much. He lost so much in **one** day. All his wealth was gone in a day; stolen, with his servants slaughtered by the sword! But then the news arrived that his children, all ten of his sons and daughters died in one sudden wind storm! If that weren’t enough then he was physically afflicted with painful boils from head to toe. He was in great misery. It was a great spiritual struggle, but the Lord preserved Job physically and spiritually. Job had spiritual lessons to learn, and he learned them. Job’s hope in all this was in the resurrection. He knew that His Redeemer lived and that he also would live to see his Redeemer with his own eyes. Ultimately, in all this, Job was blessed.

So when persecution comes, or the sufferings of disease or the maladies of old age, look to the prophets of old. Learn from them that the hope we have in Christ does not disappoint. The hope that we have in the Lord's Second Advent is the same hope to which they held fast, and the hope of the Lord's advent dispels the grief and wards off despair. Remember the precious words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

What we learn is that we can, by the Lord's grace in connection with faith, look past the persecution and all the sufferings of this present time to the reward of grace that awaits us in heaven. "Establish your Hearts!"

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." (v.7) "Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (v.8)

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)