

TEXT: James 5:7-11

THEME: GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR PATIENCE

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (James 5:7-11)

Dear Waiting and Watching Advent Christians:

You're at the grocery store. You have a very busy evening ahead of you. You find that your shopping cart has one wheel that drags. You finally finish your shopping and choose a checkout counter with only two people ahead of you. But the checker is new on the job. Her hands tremble; beads of perspiration dot her brow. Slowly she gets to you. Her cash register tape runs out. She doesn't know how to change it. You're delayed. How do you respond?

It's finally date night. You're going to your favorite restaurant. You've fasted most of the day so that you can gorge tonight. You made reservations so you won't have to wait. But when you arrive, you learn that the busy restaurant has no record of your reservation. The manager asks if you called that particular restaurant or perhaps another one in their chain. You are given a menu and escorted to a crowded bench. There you sit, so hungry you begin to gnaw on the menu. You're delayed. What's your response?

The genuineness of our faith in Christ is proven at such intersections in life. The best tests of our Christianity always take place in the mainstream of life, not in the quietness of a worship service or the pleasant atmosphere of a Bible study. It's in the grocery lines, busy restaurants, delays, setbacks, and hindrances where genuine faith is proven.

James was a man interested in helping people like you and I develop a faith that really works in the mainstream of life. By inspiration, he knew that one distinguishing mark of a genuine faith is patience. So James begins the text we're studying today with the simple command, "**Be patient.**" He uses it four times in this brief text.

The Greek word James uses for "patience" literally means "long-tempered." You've heard the expression "short-tempered." That describes a person who is easily angered. Patience is the opposite of that: not short-tempered but long-tempered.

Patience is a rather rare and remarkable virtue among people today. We stand in front of our microwaves and mutter, "C'mon, c'mon! Hurry up!" Who among us hasn't uttered the now-famous American prayer, "Lord, give me patience...and I need it right now!" Our lack

of patience has a way of robbing us of our ability to witness for Christ. It injures our home lives and our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

James is very concerned about how we react to the pain and suffering that comes into our life. He wants to help us learn how to respond to injustice, suffering, delay, and difficulty in a godly way. In our text, he gives us God's prescription for patience. He reminds us of the promise of the Lord's coming. Let's hear those words again: **Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!**

God wants us believers in Jesus Christ to find great comfort and practical encouragement in the promise of Christ's return. To the person who suffers in this life, Christianity offers the only true hope. That hope rests in the return of Christ and God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth, a place where there will no longer be pain or suffering or injustice.

But the return of Christ is mostly overshadowed as we prepare to celebrate his first coming as the Babe of Bethlehem to be our one and only Savior from sin. Even after the Christmas season, I'm afraid the return of Christ is seen by many people today as nothing more than a fascinating futuristic concept, fun to discuss, debate and study, but has little or no real effect on our daily living or struggles. It is often written off as irrelevant theology or seen as religious escapism. The truth is that the return of Christ is meant by God to strengthen our faith and to hold us up, especially during times of adversity and hardship.

You, as a Christian, are meant to find great patience and hope in the promise of the Lord's return. Because of Christ's perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, your sins are forgiven and eternal life in heaven is yours. Even though you may be experiencing great pain in this world, you must never forget that you, a believer in Jesus as your Savior, are waiting for a world where every tear will be wiped away and all forms of pain and suffering will disappear.

James concludes this text by reminding us of some of the characteristics of our Savior-God: **The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.** God does not always tell us all we want to know about our circumstances. He doesn't tell us why the plane is delayed or why the reservation is lost or why there is a traffic jam or why you are not healed or why you lost your job or why you lost a loved one. There are many secret things in life that belong only to the Lord. At such times you must simply believe that God is a God of compassion and mercy who orders all things for your good and his glory.

Remember, my friends, that God is in charge of your day—not you! God is not so concerned with accomplishing all the things you may have on your schedule as much as he is concerned with preparing you for the second coming of his Son, Jesus, as Judge of all. God often uses adversity, difficulties, irritations, and trials to draw us closer to him as we wait patiently for our deliverance through faith in our one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. That is GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR PATIENCE. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Gracious God, as we wait for the second coming of Jesus, sometimes we are troubled and disheartened. Time can be a heavy burden for us. We grow weary, discouraged, and fearful because of our problems, trials, and difficulties in this sinful world. Yet we know that you can rescue us from our confusion. You set the stars to move in precise rhythm, and you can bring order to our affairs. To you a thousand years are but a day, and you can give us the patience to live each day as a day of your grace. To you one day can be as a thousand years, and you can help us live today with the hope and patience of eternity.

In Jesus Christ, your Son, whose birth we are about to celebrate once again, you have begun the new age of life and immortality. In him, give us courage and strength, patience and hope. We ask this in his name, who has taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER