

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Lord, hear our prayers and come to us, bringing light into the darkness of our hearts, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE SERMON 'Preparation for Christmas – Patience and Perseverance' James 5

THE EPISTLE LESSON James 5:7-11 (*James urges patience as we wait for the coming of the Lord.*)

7 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. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 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.

INTRO - What was your favorite Christmas as a child? I have many wonderful memories, but one that sticks out was Christmas of 2nd grade. I was struggling at not getting in trouble in school, and not always succeeding in my struggle. I wasn't sure I would even get Christmas presents, knowing the story that presents came to good girls and boys. For some reason, my dad had to wake me up that morning, and there was something big under the tree covered with a blanket. I hadn't asked for a bike, but when they pulled off the blanket, there was a brand new bike, all fixed up with baskets, a bell. I was surprised and full of joy.

Many of us have wonderful memories of Christmas, as a child, and as an adult. Because of the excitement, children have trouble waiting for Christmas, trouble waiting for the excitement, trouble waiting for the presents. There were times when I was a parent that we had to set a time. Our kids couldn't get up before 6:00 a.m. Though, I remember some up before that time.

Waiting calls for patience, but patience is not always an easy attitude to cultivate.

I. God calls for patience as we await his coming in our Epistle lesson.

A. In verse 7 we are told **7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming.**

1. Patience is a willingness to wait.
2. Patience could help children wait for Christmas.
3. Patience can help God's people wait for Jesus to come into our lives.
 - A. There are times that we are waiting for the time when Jesus will come again.
 - B. But, there are times that we wait and wonder in the pain of life, 'Lord, where are you right now? Where is your love, your help, your deliverance?'

B. But, perhaps more instructive are verses 10 and 11 which say, **10 Brothers, as an**

example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 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.

1. Patience is not just an attitude that allows us to wait, but patience is shown in actions, called perseverance.
2. Even when things are tough, when we suffer in this world, when we suffer for our faith, we continue, not only in our waiting, but in our obedience, in our righteousness, in our love for one another, in our faith and trust.
3. The word used in this verse in the original Greek for patience means, 'long suffering.'
4. Even when being a Christian is difficult, even when it includes suffering, God's people keep going out and doing God's work, living as God's people. We patiently, persevere. Or, at least, God calls us to do so.

II. You've heard the joke where the person prays for patience. The prayer goes something like this, 'Lord, I need patience, and I need it now! Hear?!'

A. Patience is a fruit of the spirit and a virtue which shows love. God calls us to patience in today's lesson. But, Scripture also tells us our flesh is opposed to patience and perseverance.

1. We don't like to wait.
2. Our work of electronic marvels, microwaves, world wide news as it is happening, this world leads to instant gratification, not to patience.

B. Not only is patience contrary to our fleshly desires, Perseverance is not how we would choose to live or work.

1. Who wants a world where living or working includes difficulty, or suffering?
2. When things go badly, it may seem easiest to just give up.
3. If a Christian is ridiculed for witnessing, the may just stop.
4. If we try to forgive a person, or reach out to an enemy, and that goes badly, why keep trying?
5. And, if we fail because of our own weakness, our own sin, it is hard to admit that sin, and then keep trying to live as God's child.

C. But, you know what? Even if a child gets really upset at waiting for Christmas, it still comes. As we grow older, and Christmas has come every year we realize the inevitability of the coming of Christmas.

1. God is coming, whether we are ready or not.
2. James says, **the Lord's coming is near.** He also says, **The Judge is standing at the door!**
3. If he comes and we are not ready, if we are not believing, then his coming is that of judge for us, rather than Savior.

III. Yesterday I was teaching a sermon class to a couple of young men. They were to outline their first sermons. Now, I didn't just say 'Do it.' I sat there with them, and studied the Bible verses, asked questions, helped them with the task. I wasn't just the assignment giver, I was the one who helped them to do the assignment.

God doesn't just call for patience, he is the reason and source for our patience.

A. Look at verse 11. **11 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.

1. God is patient with his people.
 2. He is full of compassion and mercy.
 3. That is why we hear in 2 Peter, **9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**
- B. Friends, when we wait for God to come, one help is that we know he HAS come.
1. Jesus has already come, not only as the baby in the manger, but as the savior on the cross.
 2. Jesus patiently endured and persevered so that we may receive God's love and forgiveness.
 3. Knowing we are forgiven helps us to keep going, even when we fail.
- C. And, God has not just come in the past, he comes to us today.
1. Today, God is with us in the Sacrament, not only to forgive, but to be with us, to strengthen us, to help us with life's struggles.
 2. Today God is with us in His word to guide and comfort.
 3. Today God is with us through His people, through the Church, to encourage, help, and comfort.

CONCLUSION - Ask any little child today, it is difficult to wait for Christmas. My mother in law is ill today, but, for a couple of years she did something for our kids about the difficulty of waiting. She sent a big box of presents from Memphis to Florida, so our kids had something to open every day, until the big day arrived. In a very real way, God is with us with His love, with His forgiveness, with His people, helping and strengthening us until the final day of his coming arrives.