

Text: James 5:7-11

Theme: Lord, Give Me Patience

December 11, 2016

We've heard the phrase and likely used it, "Lord, give me patience, but I want it right now!" As we find ourselves surrounded by the busyness of the season, our patience can run short due to all the expectations and demands on our time. As James begins our text, he makes a simple, direct statement, yet his interest isn't in the events of the moment, but in the return of Christ. As we near Christmas Day, we focus on our need for patience as we await Christ's return on the Last Day.

I. We may be waiting, but not all that patiently for our Lord's return. A. As we know, we struggle to wait patiently. 1. We struggle because we're always in a hurry. In the past twenty years, faster has become the motto of the world and the way of life for us. We'd like to slow down, to make the days go by slower, but nothing seems to work. Days and months go by and the best we seem to be able to do is to keep turning the calendar. Our world has trained us well. It has taught us that faster equals more productivity so everywhere we go, they are in a hurry, so we are in a hurry. In our hurriedness, waiting patiently for our Lord falls by the wayside.

2. We struggle to wait patiently because we get tired of waiting. As a child, how long would you wait for your first trike or bike before you simply gave up and decided it wasn't going to happen? Whatever our age, we get tired, tired of waiting for things that don't arrive when we want them or according to our time schedule. For centuries, people have been waiting for our Lord's return, for Christ to bring all this confusion to an end. Yet, most of us have gotten tired of waiting, so tired that we've nearly forgotten that Christ will return and we've resigned ourselves to the fact that it is what it is and there's nothing we can do about it but keep running lest we get run over.

3. We struggle because we've got things that need to get done. If Christ returned tomorrow, how many of us would think to ourselves, "Can You give me a few days, Lord; I've got some things that I need to get done?" It sounds crazy, doesn't it, but it's not far from being accurate. We want Christ to return. We want Him to take us all to our new home in heaven, but, before He arrives, we've got things that we think need to be done, important things, things that have been on our "to do" list for a long time. We'd like to say, "I'm ready whenever You are, Lord," but in our hearts we know that most of us aren't ready because we've got other things that we think need to be done.

B. Although we struggle, how do we wait with patience for our Lord's return? 1. We wait patiently by celebrating each Christmas as the last. What if you knew this would be the last Christmas before Christ returned? What would you do differently? As we look in the manger, our Lord waits for us to prepare our hearts for His return, to set aside all the fluff and focus on the Christ Child, on what He has done and what He has promised to do in the not so distant future. When our hearts celebrate each Christmas as the last, our minds and actions will demonstrate that we are patiently and expectantly waiting for Christ's return.

2. We wait with patience by anticipating His return soon. As you look at our world, is it expecting Christ's return? Is it even thinking about it? Although our world is on a different path, waiting with patience leads us to focus on, to expect Christ's return any day. As we begin each day, our Lord encourages us to say,

“Maybe today, Lord, maybe today.” And as each day ends, He waits for our hearts to say, “Maybe tonight, Lord, maybe tonight.” When our hearts are that convinced that He could return today, we demonstrate to others and to ourselves that we are waiting eagerly, waiting with the patience that we ask our Lord to give us each new day.

3. We wait by learning to rejoice while we face life’s challenges. As James encourages patience, he says, “Do not grumble.” But what do those words have to do with patience? When we’re grumbling, we’ve lost our focus. We’ve become so focused on what’s wrong with life that we’ve forgotten this is all temporary. Rejoicing even when life isn’t great encourages us to look beyond the present as we tell ourselves, “One day, this will all come to an end. One day soon, the Lord will fix everything that’s broken by bringing this broken world to an end.” The more time we spend looking beyond the not-so-great, the more focused we will be on His return.

4. We wait by remaining immovable in our faith. James says, “Establish your heart.” In essence, he is saying, “Create an immovable foundation built on the Rock of Jesus. Build on that foundation and do not budge no matter what the world throws your way.” Today, faith is on the endangered list. Every day, people are walking away from the faith, discarding the faith, giving up on God because He isn’t moving at their speed. Surrounded by such abandonment, we say with boldness, “Here I stand. I can do no other, so help me, God.” That conviction prompts patience, prompts us to demonstrate, to display a patience that isn’t found in our world.

5. We wait patiently by reflecting on the past examples. Aware that we would struggle with patience, James offers examples. First, he mentions the prophets. As you think of Elijah, Jonah, Isaiah, and all the other prophets, what characteristic do we find in their lives? It’s patience. They were patient with God’s people because they were focused on God directing them. Then, we can toss Job into the mix and suddenly we see an incredible demonstration of patience in the midst of suffering. All those and so many others serve as our patience mentors. If they can be patient in the midst of events that threatened their lives daily, we, too, can patiently wait for our Lord to arrive.

6. We wait patiently by waiting for a better present than the one under the tree. Every year, the business world waits for us to descend on the shopping malls and online stores to find the perfect gift that we can wrap and place under the tree. As we ask our Lord for patience, we ask Him to lift our eyes beyond the gifts under the tree so that we focus on the best present, the present that arrived in the manger, but, even better, the present that’s going to return for us, who is going to erase this world from the map as He gathers all those within His family and sweeps them off to a new home, a glorious home with Him in heaven.

7. Right now may be when we need the most patience. Yet as we pray for patience during this Christmas season, pray for patience until He returns and also pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, come!” Amen.