

The 18th Sunday after Pentecost
September 26th, 2021

“Be patient until the Lord’s coming”
(James 5:7-8)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Today’s text for this 18th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading – 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. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

Here ends our text.

How are you at being patient? Does your stress level go up when you’re standing in the checkout line at the grocery store and suddenly the checkout person reaches for the phone to call the manager. No! Not the phone! This line was moving so well! Something is not working with the payment method. Or, this coupon doesn’t go with this item. Do you still want it? Let me send someone to get the right item. Or why does it always seem to happen that the checkout person switches with another right while you’re waiting in line?

Has your patience been wearing thin as we now are going through yet another wave of another Covid variant? We had to wait our turn to get a vaccine and now we need booster shots? When is this going to end and get back to normal?

Wow, how this Covid pandemic has been a test of patience! Everything is slower now. Parts are hard to come by. Things like furniture is on back order for two to three months. And if you need to see a doctor or a veterinarian, you better be ready to wait two months to get an appointment. “Be patient” comes the echo in our ears.

How difficult is it to get a room in a hospital these days? There seem to be a lot of sick people there who aren't citizens of this country. That doesn't seem right, say some people. There seems to be some injustice there. Be patient?

Sometimes I've heard people say with a bit of honesty, "I'm not a very patient person." While this may be true, God's word doesn't say this person is a lost cause. In fact, through His servant James, God speaks to all Christians that they should be patient in the face of much suffering and injustice in this world. When James says the word "Brethren" in our text. He's talking to you and me. Being patient is very much a spiritual matter.

Sure, great thinkers like Aristotle have emphasized the importance of being patient. Aristotle calls it a bitterness that bears sweet fruit. Worldly thinkers have recognized being patient as a virtue. A person is praised if one is unwavering in the face of adversity. But James is speaking about a matter of the heart isn't he?

For in our epistle, James says that Christians sometimes blame each other for the suffering and injustice that we endure.

"Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:9)

Why? Because then we're acting as judges and there is only one Judge who is standing at the door! God Himself! A Christian who grumbles instead of being patient believes that one knows better than God. And that if God allows this suffering to occur, then God must be wrong! Or maybe God isn't even in the picture! Maybe God doesn't even care anymore! How easily these kind of thoughts can creep into our minds. Are we guilty of not trusting God's will when things aren't going right? Impatience is a symptom of a spiritual sickness.

James tells us to be patient because of this important truth, "the Lord's coming is at hand". The evil that we endure in this world will come to an end when the Lord comes! The patience that we need now we won't need in heaven. For in heaven there will be no evil, no injustice and no suffering.

In the meantime, God allows us to suffer unjustly sometimes so that our faith is strengthened. God reminds us over and over again that because of sin, our sin, there is evil in this world. And the Lord had to come 2000 years ago, His first coming, to rescue us from unending suffering and torment.

Yes, when whenever we are tested in this world, James tells us to remember that the Lord is coming because He has already come and defeated injustice by His patient suffering and death on the cross!

When the Ethiopian eunuch read in Isaiah these words he had a question for Phillip.

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.” (Acts 18:32-33)

Who was this Man who patiently endured injustice and was killed? And the answer that Phillip gave him was of course, Jesus!

Jesus patiently endured ridicule, allowed all evil against Himself to pay for our entire debt of sin. He did this so that we would not have to suffer eternally after our lives are taken away from us.

And even our suffering in this world has a good plan according to God’s good will. For it establishes our hearts as we draw closer to God and throw ourselves on His mercy and forgiveness. He reminds us often that our suffering is not in vain. So Peter says in his first epistle in chapter 5,

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” (1 Peter 5:10)

So Paul also tells us in 1 Thessalonians 3.

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

It is the Lord who establishes our hearts in His word so that we are ready for the final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And of course, Jesus told us in the beatitudes in Matthew 5 how He turns our persecutions into joy!

“11 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.”

For so they persecuted the prophets. Our epistle mentions Elijah who prayed that it would not rain because Ahab was leading the people to not trust God but worship the Baals. How Elijah was persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel! When Ahab saw him, his words were, **“Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17)**

Elijah answered, not me, but you, because you have “forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals”.

So Elijah set up a challenge at Mt. Carmel, as you know from the Bible story in 1 Kings 18. Two sacrifices upon two altars to see which one would be consumed by the true God. The false prophets danced and wailed and nothing happened. Maybe your god is on vacation! Said Elijah. And they cut themselves so that they bled and still no answer.

Then Elijah dug a trench dug around his altar and had water poured upon not just once but three times, so that it filled the trenches. And God consumed the sacrifice and the altar and the water. And the people said, **““The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”**

Yes, there is but one true God who never leaves His people even though they forsake Him in times of trial. The Lord provides for us in all our needs and tells us not to ever lose heart.

“See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.”

God knows the needs of the farmer who must rely on Him for the rain for his crops and good weather to harvest them. As a farmer patiently waits on God, as the prophets patiently waited on God, so we too are told to be patient. God knows exactly what we are suffering and will help us in according to His good will as Romans 8 tells us.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

The Lord of mercy and justice promises to never forsake us. So we hear in Psalm 37.

“For the Lord loves justice, And does not forsake His saints; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.”

Be patient with what the Lord supplies you Hebrews 13 tells us.

“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

As we patiently wait for Jesus’ coming James tells us in our epistle what we are to do.

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

So as we patiently wait, we pray, sing, confess our sins and forgive one another. Oh, the Lord is good to us!

September 26 marks the national Johnny Appleseed day. The kids sang the Johnny Appleseed song in school this week.

"The Lord is good to me. And so I thank the Lord, for givin' me the things I need: the sun and rain and an apple seed. Yes, He's been good to me".

Yes, Johnny lived a humble life and patiently relied on God to bring apples to harvest for those in need. Wherever he travelled, he brought his Bible along to tell the people who it is that gives the rain and the sun – Jesus who is the Sun of righteousness. (Malachi 4:2)

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” (Romans 16:25-27)

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)