



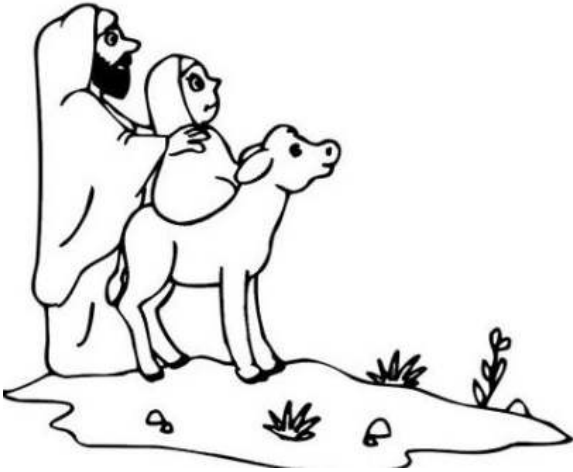
"Be Patient! Christ is Coming Soon!"

a sermon by Matthew Christians

based on James 5:7-11

Third Sunday in Advent

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⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As

an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

James 5:7-11

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

Patience! The word of the day, from the Epistle of James, is "patience." How are you at being patient? Let's find out. Raise your hand, please, if you consider yourself to be a patient person. It's hard, isn't it? Yet, knowing that our Lord is coming, we should be patient. James, like any pastor with his salt, was well aware of the headaches of his people. He knew the hurts and the heartaches and dangers that were a part of being a Christian in those days. Yet in all of these problems, the Christians were to bear their wrongs without murmuring and without resisting. Just wait on God with steady, unwavering patience. Wait, knowing that Christ will surely come again.

"*I am coming soon,*" Jesus said. "*Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown*" (Revelation 3:11). "*Soon,*" he said. In the meantime, "*Be patient. Use this waiting period to confirm your faith.*" They were not to blame one another for their troubles or in which they found themselves. They were to take the long view of life. They were to remember that when life comes to a close, wealth, possessions, prestige, power... all these earthly treasures vanish, and nothing is of importance except the presence or absence of faith in Jesus. "*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God*" (John 3:36). Knowing that one day God will call us home, we can be patient even in

times of difficulty.

James says it this way: "*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*" (vv.7–8). Besides taking the long view of life, James urged his persecuted Christians to take the farmer's view. Now, I know that farming has changed a lot in these two thousand years, but some things stay the same. The farmer must be patient. Can't do much about whether or not it rain, can you? You plant the seed and wait patiently for the rain to sprout it. After it is sprouted, you hope for enough timely rain to bring it to maturity. In the meantime he does his other work, but all the while waiting patiently for the harvest.

We Christians find ourselves in much the same position today. It's tough to wait patiently for the return of the Lord when this world seems so restless, when the devil seems to be waiting at every turn of the road to waylay us. Yet we know that to produce a bountiful, spiritual harvest God may send the rains of troubles, the storms of adversity, the long dry spells of want, misery, and anxiety. Just as the farmer has a long wait for a worthwhile harvest, the follower of Jesus knows that the spiritual harvest is worth more than the whole world.

Consider Noah, that old patriarch from Genesis. He knew what this patience meant. As he went about the process of building his immense boat, on a little hilltop outside his village, do you think he was treated well? Thought well of? Or do you suppose his neighbors thought he was crazy? Laughed at him? Ridiculed him? Here's Noah, over and over again warning the people, but no one repents. No one believes. Yet Noah was patient. He knew that God would fulfill His promise. Eventually the rains came, but Noah had to wait 120 years!

Now 120 years seems like the kind of wait that might try any man's patience, but one thing we forget to think about is the fact that Noah had help. Noah didn't just have generate all that patience on his own. He had all that ridicule to help him out. Do you know the story about the young man who asked his grandmother to pray for him. This young Christian man asked his grandma—a devout, pious woman—to pray for him... to pray that he might have more patience. She was more than happy to. She knelt down right there, in fact, and began to pray that God would send trouble and difficulties upon her grandson. Finally the young man tapped his grandma on the shoulder and said, "Nanna, you must have misunderstood me; I asked that you would pray that I might have more patience, not more trouble." The answer was: "Remember, my child, the Bible says: 'Suffering produces patience.'" (Rom. 5:3).

"*Suffering produces patience*," Paul tells us in Romans, and he's right! God works through the things we endure, He works through our hurts our trials our sorrows to build in us a greater faith—a faith that looks to Christ alone, a faith that looks outside of this world to find the only true Savior, a faith that recognizes this world is temporary, but Christ is everlasting. Look up! Paul says. Lift your heads above it all and see your Lord Jesus, and you too—with the patience of a St. Paul—you too can say "*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:14).

Because of the victory Christ has won for us through Calvary and the empty tomb, we can be steady in patience. Because He made our journey into death and then passed from death to life eternal, we can be certain

of eternal glory with Him. No matter how dark or dreary the path we follow, no matter how heavy the cross and troubles we bear, no matter how prosperous the wicked seem to be, no matter how many apparent blessed are enjoyed by the ungodly, we can carry our burdens with patience and trust.

We also take courage, of course, from the example of God's people. Take courage from the prophets as James advised us to: "*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord*" (v.10). There were many prophets, and they suffered many things. Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and all the rest— they may have conquered kingdoms; but how they suffered! Listen to what Hebrews tells us: "[they] suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated –of whom the world was not worthy– wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:36-37).

Take courage from their inspiring examples of long-suffering, from their faithfulness to God, from the way they laid hold of divine strength. This is that great cloud of witnesses who pointed to Jesus. They patiently carried out their God-given assignments even in the midst of darkness and despair. Whatever comes to you— if you lose a loved one, or a child brings you grief, your witness goes unheard, sickness enters your home, or if you can't make ends meet— life seems awfully dark. But the psalm writer say to God: "*darkness is as light with you*" (Psalm 139:12). Jesus is the Sun of our soul, the one who came to heal our broken hearts through His suffering on the cross. Take courage— Jesus is alive! God will reward your patience.

Take courage also from the patience of Job: "*Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*" Job had lost his children all his earthly possessions. He lost his health, was condemned by his friends, he even lost the love and loyalty of his wife. Yet he left his troubles with God; he trusted in God. "*Though He slay me, [yet] I will trust in him*" (Job 13:15). Job was rewarded for his patience and trust. Right here on earth God gave Job his possessions. He gave him back his health and wealth, gave him children, restored his position in society, and Job lived to a ripe, old age, even long enough to see "*his sons and his sons' sons*" (Job 42:16). From the story of Job we learn a lesson that will help us bear our burdens. The LORD truly is compassionate and of tender mercy. Not only does use our sufferings to help us learn patience, but the Lord rewards that patience as well!

In the light of the Lord's coming, in light of Jesus' victory over the grave and the promise of His return, in light, too of the patience of Job and the prophet, you can be sure of God's love for you. You can be sure of your eternity. You can be patient and content even though the wicked prosper and the ungodly seem to have so many blessings to enjoy. For we are God's and Christ is ours, and in His hour, which is near, we shall be with Him in eternal bliss and glory. This is our Christian hope. "*Be patient, ... until the coming of the Lord... Be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand*" (vv. 7a, 8). In the name of Jesus our Joy, Amen.

May the peace of God –which surpasses understanding– guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.