

“ADVENT IS A TIME FOR WAITING!”

James 5:7-11

Fellow Watchers of our Lord’s Coming,

“LORD, GRANT ME PATIENCE, AND PLEASE HURRY!” I’m sure you’ve heard that one-liner prayer before. You chuckle because it’s funny, but how true it is. We are by nature impatient people. And if there’s ever a time of year when your patience seems to run out quickly, it’s the holiday season. Finding that parking spot close to the door tests your patience. Driving slowly on slick roads with others whizzing by you tests your patience. Sitting at a RR crossing with a 57 car train going 20 mph tests your patience. Recovering in the hospital after surgery tests your patience. Rambunctious students in schools are testing their teachers’ patience as the Christmas break approaches.

Waiting is not a virtue we all have. When it comes to our Lord’s first coming, we can handle that. 10 days from today, Christmas is here. The calendar says so. We know what we have to do before then. But when it comes to our Lord’s 2nd coming, is our patience running thin? Are we growing impatient about Christ’s advent or just chucking it altogether figuring he’s never going to come.

If patience is a virtue, **then impatience is a sin.** It may take a lot of self-examination to admit that. It may take God’s Law pricking our souls to believe that. But there has to be a reason why the Spirit would lead James to write the words before us today to remind us that:

“ADVENT IS A TIME FOR WAITING!”

1. With patient expectation
2. With persevering endurance

1

The book of James is a classic book of instructions on the difference between hearing the Word and doing what it says. It is the cutting edge between the attitude that believes I can hear what God says, but I really don’t have to live what God says. James uses that classic example in chapter one of a **person that looks at himself in the mirror, and then goes away immediately forgetting what he just saw. James says that describes the person who listens to the Word, but doesn’t do what it says.** (James 2:23-24)

BE PATIENT, THEN, UNTIL THE LORD’S COMING. Advent is this time for waiting with patient expectation. Here’s what we know. When Jesus left this earth, He told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for each of them. And if he was going to prepare a place for them, Jesus is going to come back to take them where he is. If that wasn’t the case, Jesus would have said so. But because he did say he is coming back, then he is coming back.

That’s his promise. In the final chapter of the entire Bible, the Spirit records Jesus’ words: **BEHOLD, I AM COMING SOON!** {Rev 22:7} And again, he says: **I AM COMING SOON! MY REWARD IS WITH ME, AND I WILL GIVE**

1

TO EVERYONE ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE. I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE FIRST AND THE LAST, THE BEGINNING AND THE END. {Rev 22:12-13} And the second to the last verse of all the Scriptures, the last words printed in red (if you have a red letter edition indicating Christ speaking), we read: **YES, I AM COMING SOON!** {Rev 22:20} Three times in one chapter at the end of the Bible, we have these encouragements to keep waiting and watching with patient expectation because Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

As each day passes, the temptation grows to reject his warnings. And if we don’t reject them, we ignore them. The devil works overtime to pull you away from these truths so you are completely unprepared when it does happen. His happiest moment will be the scores of souls whom Jesus will find unbelieving or disbelieving and completely ignoring the Last Day. And as much as we stress the need to be ready during this Advent season, he works as hard as he can during the other 11 months of the year to forget everything we have heard during this Advent season. He wants you so wrapped up in your own little world that you squeeze Jesus right out of it. And when that happens, the light of our faith grows dim, if not completely out!

Thank God there is Jesus to wait for. God sent him here to earth to be our Savior from our impatient sins. Jesus was so patient with us to carry our sins to the cross to suffer and die for them. Why should He do that? Why should he be patient with us? Because His loving grace showers over you and his will to have all saved and come to the knowledge of the truth moved him to earn completely forgiveness by shedding his blood on the cross. That’s why God is still patient with us – because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and His compassionate love for sinners.

Now patience can be a way of life for God’s people. Remember the phrase I suggested you remember for 7 days two weeks ago in my sermon? **TODAY COULD BE THE DAY JESUS RETURNS.** God has made us great promises. Trust them. He has promised the resurrection of the body when he said: **I WILL RAISE YOU UPON THE LAST DAY.** {Jn 6:40} He has promised you heaven through our Lord Jesus when he said: ... **“whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.** {Jn 3:16} That’s our great hope...surely coming. But it is not here yet, so we must hear and trust these promises while waiting with patient expectation **“until the coming of the Lord.”**

James' example of the farmer is excellent. If you've ever lived on the farm or out in the country, then this really hits home. The farmer plows and plants his crops. He expects the seed to grow, but he can't make it grow any faster or slower. He has to remain patient. His crops can't be hurried. He waits for the warm rains to irrigate his fields so the crops grow. He doesn't schedule the rainfall, he doesn't control the heat, he can't prevent the hailstorm. He must simply sit back and wait for the fall harvest to happen.

Advent is a time for waiting with patient expectation. When Christ returns on the clouds of heaven, we shall see him as he is: no more pain, death, tears, debts, trials/troubles. The old order of things will pass away and we will be with the Lord forever. James says: **YOU TOO, BE PATIENT AND STAND FIRM, BECAUSE THE LORD'S COMING IS NEAR.** Look out over the horizon – the day is getting closer **AND TODAY COULD BE THE DAY JESUS COMES!**

2

Waiting is not something we're always good at. Depending on the circumstances, it can get downright grueling. Thus James not only encourages us to wait with patient expectation, but he also adds **WITH PERSEVERING ENDURANCE.**

In this world of trials and troubles, all of us struggle at time to remain positive and hopeful. We get attacked for our beliefs. We endure hardship, ridicule, or even rejection for our faith. We become impatient with each other and sin rules our hearts again. To that James says: **DON'T GRUMBLE AGAINST EACH OTHER OR YOU WILL BE JUDGED. THE JUDGE IS AT THE DOOR.** Even in the community of believers, there are times we complain and let our frustrations and emotions get the better of us. We sin to others with our ill-will toward them in thought, words, or even actions. Verbal abuse, gossip or negative criticism have no place in God's church whether that's here in church, school, or K2L. Who wants to join a church that is full of back-biting, grumbling, and quarreling? Even unbelievers can sniff that out.

James points us to the prophets and Job who were patient in the midst of suffering **with persevering endurance.** Now they had something to grumble about. They were rejected, chased out, beaten, and killed. Moses led Israel 40 years to the promised land. God's prophets repeatedly preached repentance to God's people, and were scorned. Noah faced consequences building an ark in the midst of a desert. Even Job trusted God even when everything in his life fell apart. Yet he remained patient and unshaken with persevering endurance and said: **The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised.** {Job 1:21}

By the power of the Holy Spirit, you can wait with preserving endurance like the prophets and Job. Because that same Spirit that strengthened their hearts is in you. By the power of God's Word, he assures you of your forgiveness of sins, your future heaven as your home, and a life with Jesus that is forever. That Gospel gives us the strength **to hang in there**, to **keep on going**, to **never let go** of the promises of our gracious God. That Gospel brings us peace to know that when Jesus does return, we will be ready for him with open arms – ready to meet and greet him on that great day. That Gospel allows us to wait with preserving endurance against any and all attacks of the devil and one day to be free from him forever.

That's the kind of waiting James wants us to do during Advent and all year. And by the promises of God, know that he will bless you...**IN LIFE** with his mercy...**in DEATH** when he brings your soul home to glory...or on the **LAST DAY** when he calls you by name for eternity.

Be patient, my friends, the day is coming soon. **Just keep waiting with patient expectation and persevering endurance** which says everyday: **I JUST CAN'T WAIT!** Amen