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James 5:7-11, Psalm 40
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Patience

Today we consider my least favorite Fruit of the Spirit. Patience. Probably because it is the hardest one to produce through the dead wood of my own branches. It is also one that I know for sure that I can't produce on my own but only with the help of the Holy Spirit. If it were up to me, I'd create patience NOW, in my time, on my terms.

But have you noticed that God never seems to be in a hurry about anything? God is eternal and not constrained by time like we humans are.

So God if you are listening, could you just hurry up on giving us this fruit today? Deal!

Personal confession... I'm not a very patient person.

My favorite place is Home Depot... "Where Doers Get Things Done!"

That's me. I'm a doer. I get things done. I don't like being delayed.

Like when God called me into the ministry, it took several years for the right position to come along.

When we started the permitting process for this new sanctuary with the Clark County Permitting Office, it took them forever.

When I was finishing up my doctoral dissertation, my professor didn't like the direction I was headed and asked me to start it over.

Road blocks. Barriers. Speed bumps. Drive me crazy.

When I'm at the store, I would much rather ring up my own groceries, because I can save seconds of my time.

I'm sure that this is something I should work out with a counselor but, is there any one else out there who can remotely relate to me this morning?

Thank you for letting me know that I am not alone.

The scriptures that we are going to look at today seem to indicate that our waiting is important ground in which God produces something beautiful in and through us. First we'll hear from James 5:7-11 and then Psalm 40:1-3. So let's listen now for the Word of the Lord.

James 5:7-11

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting 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 one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers and sisters, 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 count as 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.

Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

When I first came to Cascades, I was approached after a Sunday message by an older Scottish gentleman, Larry Anderson. As a kid, Larry had spent a lot of time confined in bed recovering from a serious illness. He spent many days watching the clock wondering when the time would come that he could finally go out and play with the other children. Needless to say, as an older adult, he was time bound and very impatient.

Coming up to me, he said, "Fine sermon, Lad. Fine sermon! But if you could just get it down to five minutes. Five minutes that's all you need. If you can't say it in five minutes, you shouldn't say it at all."

Then he walked away.

I wasn't sure exactly what to make of this critique, but it has sure made me laugh ever since.

Patience was not his strength.

Studies show that as a culture we are becoming more and more impatient because we live in an instant environment.

Instant food and coffee. Who needs to wait for that slow barista when I can just add water and stir it together myself.

Instant information and communications. People get anxious when you don't immediately respond to a text messaging. We call it ghosting.

Instant entertainment. Remember when you had to wait for a movie to come out in the box office or for a video tape/dvd to arrive in your mail?

Instant fortunes. It seems that all you need to do is come up with a brilliant idea, pitch it to some angel investors, and voila you are a billionaire.

And now with the help of Artificial Intelligence, we can have instant college essays, instant passage of law bar exams, and instantly crafted sermons on Sunday morning. (By the way, none of today's sermon was generated by AI. But more and more, I am hearing how my colleagues are using AI in their sermon developments.)

As a culture, we don't want to wait or work for anything, especially things that take time, or need to percolate.

And all this instant gratification is making us as impatient and unpleasant to deal with as ever.

Authors Trask and Goodall write, "Patience is an excellent conscious defense against the frequent minor frustrations of life. Selfish immature individuals who give themselves too many rights are constantly plagued with anger, since so many of their 'rights' are violated. Giving up those rights to God and expecting few things to be perfect will result in patience, greater humility, less anger, and greater joy in life."¹

This morning I'd like to look at the Old Testament and learn more about God's patience. Then we will zip forward to the New Testament to see what we can learn about Jesus' patience with the people he encountered. We'll consider how Jesus imparts his patience to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. And then we will ask what is God saying to us today?

The entire Old Testament is a story of God who is nothing but patient with his stiff-necked obstinate people who refuse to live according to his ways.

The Hebrew word for patience is qavah. It means to gather together, look patiently, wait upon, or expect. It is also the same Hebrew root word for waiting. Qavah. It literally means "I have waited with waiting."

Exodus 34 tells us, "The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."²

The Psalms speak of God's patience. Built in to many of the psalms there is a marker called "Selah," which calls us to pause. It is there to get us to slow down as we read or sing, so that we take in what we are saying. Patience.

¹ Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit, Becoming the Person God Wants You to Be* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2000), 72.

² Exodus 34:6

Psalm 33 says, "We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you."³

Psalm 103, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."⁴

Lamentations, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. New every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord. Great is Thy faithfulness."⁵

The Prophet Micah said, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."⁶

There is a story of when Moses was being pestered by God's people to provide water and food while they wandered in the desert. So God told Noah to speak to a rock to bring forth water. Instead, out of frustration, and not patience, he struck the rock with his staff, bringing forth water. As a result of his disobedience or lack of patience, he was not permitted to enter in the Promised Land when they arrived.⁷

Author Stephen Eyre in his Bible Study on Patience wrote, "God is not pleased with this sense of hurry. As a result, my life with him has included a lengthy term of schooling in a different way of living. When I say, "Quick," God seems to say, "Slow." When I say, "Now," God seems to say, "Later."⁸

Folks, we see by Moses' example that not being patient or being controlled by the Holy Spirit can come with big consequences.

Now let's zip forward to the New Testament to see what we can learn about Jesus' patience.

The Greek word for patience is makrothumeo. Macro means "long." Thumeo means temper. It takes a long time to get angry. It means to be long suffering, have patience, or patiently endure. It also implies enduring suffering, or putting up with others.

³ Psalm 33:20-22

⁴ Psalm 103:8-10

⁵ Lamentations 3:22-23

⁶ Micah 7:18-19

⁷ Numbers 20:10-11

⁸ Stephen Eyre, *Patience, The Benefits of Waiting, Fruit of the Spirit Bible Studies*(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 9.

Time and time again, we see Jesus' patience with the people he encountered. Like when he encountered a woman caught in the midst of adultery, he was more bothered by her accusers than he was her actions. He deals with her gently without condemnation, but also tells her to go and sin no more.

When a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years reached through the crowd to touch the hem of his robe and be healed, Jesus felt power flow from him, turned around and listened to this woman's whole story. He was not in a hurry. He was patient. Makrothumeo.

Though his disciples wanted to stick to a strict time frame as they traveled, Jesus stopped to give children his attention and blessed them.

We hear how as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem just before his crucifixion that he said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."⁹

The imagery he uses is that of a hen gathering her chicks in, which is the same image for the Hebrew for long suffering. Parents you understand this long suffering as we watch our children wrestle with learning that God's ways are best for them. Qavah. Be patient.

As Jesus was being crucified the Gospel writer Matthew said, "When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross."¹⁰

Then after his death and resurrection, as he was being taken up to heaven, he told his disciples, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father has promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized you with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."¹¹

The Greek word that Luke uses here for wait is perimeno. Peri means around. Meno means to remain or stay. To stay around here. Don't move on away from where you are currently. But wait. Wait for instructions. Wait for what is next. Wait for the Holy Spirit.

Be patient!

Which is SO important, because this kind of waiting isn't something we can do on our own. We need the power and strength that only comes from God's ability to be patient, Jesus' ability to be patient. Given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Author Christopher Wright in his book, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*, says, "So patience is a tough sort of word. It demands strength and stamina, and it

⁹ Matthew 23:37

¹⁰ 1 Peter 2:20-24

¹¹ Acts 1:4b-5.

depends on being able to exercise control over our reactions to others. None of that is easy. It doesn't come naturally to us, which is why we need the Spirit of God to make it grow in our lives."¹²

So what then is God saying to us today?

Are we needing some patience?

Are there test results that we are eagerly awaiting from the doctors?

Is there an estranged relationship that needs healing?

Are we waiting for that perfect job to come through?

Are we waiting for someone to come home?

Are we waiting to step into that next season of life?

Are we waiting to do something or go somewhere?

Are we waiting for this dreaded election season to be over?

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians, "I urge you...be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."¹³

And to the Philippians he encouraged, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead., I press on to take hold of the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."¹⁴

So my friends, if God is patient with us, let us be more patient with ourselves. "St Francis of Sales said, "Have patience with all things but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them - every day begin the task anew."

Let us be more patient with one another. Proverbs 15 says, "A patient person calms a quarrel."¹⁵

Let us be more patient with our spouses.

Let us be more patient with our children. Remember their little legs can't walk as fast as ours can.

Let us be more patient with our parents, especially as they get older.

Let us be more patient with those who don't yet know Christ. How can we expect them to live according to God's plan if it has not yet been written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Let us understand that we are all works in progress and so we should extend that grace to one another. God is not done with us yet. Authors Trask and Goodall write, Patience is real faith in action. "People who have learned to let this fruit

¹² Christophe J. H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit, Growing in Christlikeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2017), 70.

¹³ Ephesians 4:1-2

¹⁴ Philippians 3:13-14

¹⁵ Proverbs 15:8

grow in their lives are able to ‘hang in there,’ to not surrender to the circumstances or give up when going through trials.”¹⁶

Let us be more patient with the world in which we live. We know that one day soon, Jesus will return and make all things new that are broken!

And finally let us strive to be more patient with God, who is never in a hurry. And if God is never in a hurry, then neither should we! Amen!

¹⁶ Trask and Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, 66.