

SERMON NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - FRUIT OF PATIENCE

“Persistently Patience” based on Job 1:13-22; Matt. 4:1-11; James 5:7-11

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Friends, today we finally arrived to the fourth fruit of the spirit in our sermon series. And it is the fruit of patience or forbearance as it's written in NIV translation. The theme of the message today is “Persistently Patient.” And the reason I brought up the hypothetic question about me forgot to bring my sermon notes is just to invite you to reflect, how patient are we when it comes to waiting on something, or how patient are we when the circumstances before us isn't what we would like to see or experience.

Friends in Christ, I have been preaching through the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5 for a month now. So far, I have preached on the first three fruits. The fruit of love, joy, and peace. And today, here comes the fruit of patience.

To be honest, writing this reflection on patience has been much more difficult than the previous three. I struggled to prepare this message because this past few months, my own patience was really being tested. As most of you are aware, I've been waiting for a permit from immigration for the past eight months. And I can tell you it hasn't been an easy journey.

Started October last year I wasn't work and need to move from one house to another for a few months in Vancouver, relying on my saving, which not a lot as I was student the whole time I'm in Canada. And even from January, when I arrived here till about April, I wasn't able to work still and even though I'm working since May and able to do my pastoring role for you, there still a lot of uncertainties about how September would look like for me as summer months comes to an end.

And even if I weren't going through this season of waiting in uncertainties, I think I would still find it difficult to preach about patience. Because the truth is, I'm not naturally a patient person. I don't like waiting. I want things done as quickly as possible, and I'm one of those person who often rather do something myself than wait for someone else to do it. Because I don't like waiting.

Maybe some of you can relate. You find yourself checking your phone over and over, waiting for a phone call, a medical report, or an answer to any prayer you've been holding for sometime. Or perhaps you simply get frustrated when life doesn't move at the pace you want it to.

And if some of you identify yourself as a very patient person. Good for you! I will not disagree with that; cause maybe you are. But, for most people, patience can be difficult in certain circumstances. Whether it's waiting in a doctor's office for your appointment time, sitting in traffic jam when you need to be somewhere else soon.

Patience is also particularly difficult when your life circumstances aren't as you hope for when you need to suffer for something or when God simply allows some unfortunate situation to happen in your life. With experiences we all have, I hope we all agree that patience is one of the things that is easy to talk about but difficult to practice.

Now, I would like to invite you to think of a time when you were dealing with problems—plural—which means multiple problems at the same time. *How patient were you?* Because I believe there is always a limit for us as humans. We might be able to handle one or two things that are testing us, but at some point, when it becomes too much, we might lose our temper.

Friends, the word 'patience' is mentioned in Bible nearly 70 times. It's a lot and that means there something about it that we as human should learn about. We now live in a culture of instant gratification. Everything is available at the touch of a button, and because of that, waiting has become something we naturally resist. In fact, our struggle with waiting begins at a very young age.

You may have heard of the famous experiment known as the **Marshmallow Test**. In this experiment, a marshmallow was placed in front of a child, and the child was told, if they resist the temptation of eating the marshmallow and wait for 5 to 15 minutes, they'll be given more marshmallow.

The adult then would then leave the room while a camera recorded the child's reaction. If you've ever watched those videos, they're both entertaining and revealing. Some children patiently wait,

doing everything they can to resist the temptation. Others stare at the marshmallow, smell it, poke it, lick it—and eventually give in and eat it. For them, the promise of a second marshmallow later isn't enough to resist the one sitting right in front of them.

And in many ways, we're not so different. As an adult we don't enjoy waiting either. We want the answer now, the solution now, the blessing now. Waiting often feels like the hardest part.

If we dig deeper into our readings today, the word that translates as “patience” or “forbearance” is taken from Greek word, *macrothumia*. It's made up of two words: *macro* meaning “long” and *thumia* meaning “temper” or “explosion.” So, a synonym of the literal translation could be “long-suffering.” Patience that we talked about here beyond of “waiting for something.” It's beyond of more marshmallow if we are willing to wait. If we understand the root of the term, patient person is the one who has a long fuse. They are slow to become angry—amidst the frustrations or temptations.

Jesus himself needed to pass through some unpleasant experiences that tested his patience. For example, in Matthew 4, which we read this morning, we see Jesus being led by the Spirit into the desert. He wasn't eat for forty days and forty nights and afterwards for sure he was hungry. And that was the time when the tempter approached him. Jesus had to have been suffering, but he somehow resists the temptation offered to Him in the form of bread. Here Jesus shows us what patience and perseverance look like.

Now, some of us might say, “He is Jesus. The Son of God. Of course, He can manage Himself and patiently go through all the temptations before Him.” But, we need to remember that Jesus was also fully-human with all the human emotions and physical needs as we do have.

And if we move to the other story from the book of Job, we learn that Job suffer many things, he loses everything he has and his friends come to him with some awful theology to explain why everything happened instead of listening and helping him, but he bears it all and never turns away from God.

In the span of one day, Job is given four reports, each informing him that his sheep, servants, and ten children died on the same day during a severe windstorm. Job then rips his clothes and shaves his head in sorrow, yet he still praises God in his prayers.

If we read the book of Job as a whole, we can see that Job clearly didn't understand everything, and in chapter 3 he got frustrated. He even cursed the day when he was born, which shows how desperate he was in that very moment.

Job also was “angry” with God in chapter 16. But, if you read until the end of the book, you would be able to see that Job still showed patience by keeping his face turned toward God.

Friends, Job shows us that we can be honest with God about how difficult waiting on God is. We can bring our questions and doubts. We can be sad and angry and confused in God’s presence. That doesn’t mean we are impatient believers. This is not a lack of faith, but instead, an active faith that goes to God with questions rather than trying to figure out everything on our own.

In our reading from James this morning, we read these words, *“7 Be patient, 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.”* (James 5:7-8)

Here we see the writer mention that we need to be patient like a farmer. If you are a farmer or know a farmer, you know that they are completely dependent on the weather, something completely beyond their control. The weather cannot be controlled or changed. And even if they really took care of their farm, the weather was good, there still a possibilities everything will get ruined by pest or insect that just come out of nowhere.

So, with that in mind, in our life when circumstances are uncontrollable, when people are unchangeable, and even when problems are unexplainable, imagine God says to you, to us, “Be patient.”

You might be familiar with the saying, “for everything there is a season.” And there is one benediction that I really love and sometimes sang during blessings and some of the verses sound like this,

*"For everything there is a season, a time for meeting, a time to say goodbye;
For everything there is a season, a time for loving, a time for letting go;
For everything there is a season a time for laughter, a time for tears and pain,
in all things God is near always guiding your way."*

As Scripture reminds us, "For everything there is a season." Every season of life has its beginning and its end. Our circumstances may not change as quickly as we would like, but they will not last forever. There are many situations in life that are beyond our control. We cannot always choose our circumstances, but we can choose how we respond to them. We can choose how we wait, how we endure, and how we trust God in the midst of the waiting.

A lot of things happen in our lives, both good and not so good. Some questions about life might never be answered. Some of us might want children, but it's not happening. Some of us might be waiting for healing from an illness. Many of us might be waiting for God to answer our prayers over the years. And some of us may even feel like we've waited so long, maybe God doesn't care.

But the Scriptures assure us this is not the case. God's timing is different than ours and God does care. If we remember that, then perhaps, like Job, we too can maintain our faith and wait patiently on God, trusting that things might not always turn out as we want, but they will turn out good at the end.

Few weeks ago I sang with Lindsay here in this church a song that called "Joy in the morning" and if you remember, the lyrics went like this:

*Everything happens for a reason, but you don't know what you don't know
And you'll never have peace if you don't let go of tomorrow
'Cause it ain't even faith till your plan falls apart but you still choose to follow
If it doesn't make sense right now, it will when it's over*

*There will be joy in the morning, There will be joy in the morning
If it's not good, then He's not done, no, He's not done with it yet. There will be joy in the morning."*

Friends, some of the most beautiful moments in the book of Job are when he expresses his faith in the goodness of God's character, despite the fact that he is not feeling that goodness at the moment. And that is faith. Believe and trust in something when we can't see it, yet.

In the same way, when we are experiencing what feels like clouds obscuring the goodness of God, we can trust that God's goodness remains, as certain as the sun which will shine again in the morning.

I would like to close with a question today. The question I would like you to ask yourselves, *"Is it possible for me to be persistently patient?"* Waiting for the joy that comes in the morning, when it feels like I trapped in the darkness of night for too long.

When we know and are confident that the God who loves us is not merely the God of the past, who acted in history. But He is God who still at work today, I hope we get the assurance that we will be able to wait patiently. Because God is present with us, active in our lives, and sovereign over every circumstance we face.

No matter what is happening around us, God is still in control. His timing is perfect, His purposes are good, and His love never fails. So let us continue to believe in Him, trust Him, and rely on Him—even when the waiting is long.

Before we listen to a reflection music that has been prepared by Lynne and our choir, let me leave you with this story.

There was a husband and wife who were leaving church after Sunday service. And don't worry—it wasn't here at Stamford, and it certainly wasn't this morning! It happened somewhere else, a long time ago.

And as they were walking to their car, the wife said, "That was a wonderful sermon on patience." Her husband smiled, nodded, and replied, "It was... but that pastor went ten minutes too long. Now the restaurant we are about to go to for lunch might be full."

May God bless us all with the gift of patience, not just when listening to sermons, but every day, in all situations, this day and always. Amen.